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COLERIDGE'S USE OF VISUAL IMAGERY IN THE CONVERSATION POEMS

by

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A debt of gratitude

is due to

Dr. Wilfred S. Donald, my advisor and friend,

and to

my mother and father.
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Chapter One — Introduction

I.

The importance of imagery has been recognized throughout the centuries, and Aristotle expressed its creative power when he wrote concerning the metaphor: "... these words are pleasantest which give us new knowledge. Strange words have no meaning for us; common terms we know already; it is metaphor which gives us root of this pleasure. Thus, when the poet calls old age 'a dried stalk,' he gives us a new perception by means of the common genus; for both the things have lost their bloom." In Old English kennings, such as "swan-road," "whale-road," or "storm of swords," the visual image was operative. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope—all great poets molded imagery to suit their individual needs. Most sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century English critics, however, were apt to regard the image as an ornament, a mere decoration. Dryden was the nonconformist to literary convention, since he wrote, "Imaging is, in itself, the very height and life of Poetry."2

By the time of the Romantic Movement, the views that a poem may be an image composed of a number of images and that imagery is at the core of poetry were universally accepted (Bay-Lewis, p. 19). Among the
Romantics, Coleridge was the chief progenitor of this view, traces of which may be found in his lectures, *Biographia Literaria*, *Aqua Poetae*, and *Letters*. The modern critics, Richard Hartog Fogle and C. Day-Lewis, in excellent discussions of poetic imagery, recognize the timelessness of Coleridge's ideas on the subject. The definition, suggested by Coleridge, that a poetic image is "a word picture charged with emotion or passion," seems valuable to Day-Lewis. Coleridge had written, "Images, however beautiful . . . do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion" (Day-Lewis, p. 19). This statement emphasizes the fact that imagery should be centralized or unified and elaborates the difference between poetic imagery "modified by a predominant passion" and the "sensuous word-pictures" found in prose. A more complete definition is given by Caroline Spurgeon in her book, *Shakespeare's Imagery* (New York, 1936), p. 9: "We know that, roughly speaking, it [an image] is . . . the little word-picture used by a poet or prose writer to illustrate, illuminate and embellish his thought. It is a description or an idea, which by comparison or analogy, stated or understood, with something else, transmits to us through the emotions and associations it arouses, something of the 'wholeness,' the depth and richness of the way the writer views, conceives or has felt what he is telling us." For the purpose of discussing Coleridge's use of visual imagery, the definition of a visual image as a word-picture charged with poetic passion and having either a direct or indirect appeal to the sense of sight, seems
Goleridge was the critical mouthpiece of the Romantic poets. After his period of poetic productivity ceased, he expressed his critical views—views then concurrent with what the other Romantics were practicing in their poetry, such as Byron in Childe Harold, Shelley in Alastor, and Keats in his odes. Imagery played an important part in the poetry. In the eighty-four lines of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," Shelley used forty-three images, and Keats in his "Ode to a Nightingale" with a total of eighty lines made use of eighty-one images. Imagery was no less important to Goleridge, who discussed Shakespeare's use of it in the following manner:

I think I should have conjectured from those poems [Venus and Adonis and Lucrece], that even then the great instinct, which impelled the poet to the drama, was secretly working in him, prompting him—by a series and never broken chain of imagery, always vivid and, because unbroken, often minute; by the highest effort of the picturesque in words, of which words are capable, higher perhaps than was ever realized by any other poet, even Dante not excepted; to provide a substitute for that visual language, that constant intervention and running comment by tone, look and gesture, which in his dramatic works he was entitled to expect from the players... You seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything.

"You seem to be told nothing, but to see... everything" aptly describes Goleridge's own poetry, especially his poetry in point—the conversation poems.

In his Lectures Goleridge once said that "by sensuous images," we "obtain truth as at a flash," and truth symbolized in nature further
impressed him, since he wrote, "In looking at objects of nature while I
on thinking, as at yonder noon dim-glimmering through the dewy window
pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolical
language for something within us that already and forever exist."6

Poetry is again distinguished from prose, and in this well-known
passage from the Biographia Literaria, the need of imagery for unity,
for "one predominant thought," is also emphasized:

Imagery even taken from nature, much more when transplanted from
books, as travels, voyages, and works of natural history; affecting
incidents; just thoughts; interesting personal or domestic feelings;
and with these the art of their combination or intertexture in the
form of a poem; may all by incessant effort be acquired as a trade,
by a man of talents and much reading, who, as I once before observed,
has mistaken an intense desire of poetic reputation for a natural
poetic genius; the love of the arbitrary and for a possession of
the peculiar name. But the sense of musical delight, with the
power of producing it, is a gift of imagination; and this together
with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and
modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or
feeling, may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learned.
It is in these that "poeta nascitur non fit" (Shawcross, p. 14).

His definition of a "legitimate poem" further elucidates the subject:

"But if the definition sought for be that of a legitimate poem, I
answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually support and
explain each other; all in their proportion harmonising with, and
supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement"
(Shawcross, p. 10).

In addition to Coleridge's theoretical observations on poetic
imagery, Dorothy Wordsworth recorded in her Journal a happening, which
gives hearty illustration to the fact that his incessant efforts as a
poet had been to find the "right word":
A lady and a gentleman, more accomplished tourists than ourselves, came to the spot; they left us at the seat, and we found them again at another station above the Falls. Coleridge, who is always good-natured enough to enter into conversation with anybody whom he meets in his way, began to talk with the gentleman, who observed that it was a majestic waterfall. Coleridge was delighted with the accuracy of the epithet, particularly as he had been setting in his own mind the precise meaning of the words grand, majestic, sublime, etc., and had discussed the subject with William at some length the day before. "Yes sir," says Coleridge, "it is a majestic waterfall." "Sublime and beautiful," replied his friend. Poor Coleridge could make no answer, and, not very desirous to continue the conversation, came to us and related the story, laughing heartily.

The various revisions made in his poems further exemplify Coleridge's unending quest to express himself artfully. The poetic image must be perfected independently, as well as in regard to the poem as a whole.

Imagery to Coleridge, then, both in theory and practice was the centralizing and the unifying force in a poem, and in this study I shall try to show how Coleridge uses visual imagery artistically to express his thoughts, and how the visual imagery, in turn, acts to unify his poems. In order to make this study more lucid, I have classed the poems under various headings, which indicate the use of imagery. These headings are central imagery, serial imagery, polar imagery, and multifarious imagery. The central imagery pattern occurs when one image is seen in various aspects throughout the poem. Imagery in a series related by a central thought is called serial imagery. The term polar imagery indicates two types of imagery at opposite poles to each other, which are the poet's vehicle of thought. Various kinds of images used within a single poem are designated by the term multifarious imagery.
A definition of the term "conversation poem" is also necessary before moving into the body of this work. Coleridge himself designated only one of the poems now found in the conversation group as a "conversation poem." The title "The Nightingales: a Conversational Poem, written in April, 1793" appeared in the 1793 edition of the Lyrical Ballads, and "Conversational" was later changed to "Conversation" in the Shewing Leaves (1828, 1829). It was not until 1925, that George Melan Harper listed and defined Coleridge's conversation poems. A gap of thirty years followed before the conversation poems were again treated as a group. In 1955, Richard Harper added Harper's list and took a more penetrating look at the poems.

The conversation poems, according to Harper, are The Relian Horn, Reflections on having Left a Place of Retiremet, This Line-Less Horn or Prison, Event at Midnight, Fears in Solitude, The Nightingale, Reflection, and To William Wordsworth. Other lesser poems may be added to this list, but Harper considers these the "most substantial" and the "best" (p. 237).

Harper also calls the conversation poems "poems of friendship," and says, "They cannot be even vaguely understood unless the reader knows what persons Coleridge had in mind" (p. 235). This statement seems a bit overdrawn, especially in the light of this study. In The Relian Horn, for instance, the reader is aware that Sara is Coleridge's beloved, and that is all one needs to know to understand the poem.
Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement is not addressed to anyone in particular and is a kind of soliloquy. In Poetica: An Ag the reader learns that Coleridge in addressing a very dear friend, and the fact that Coleridge's remarks are addressed to Sarah Hutchinson is insignificant; this is further illustrated by the fact that the poem was first addressed to William Wordsworth, that is, this poem would seem to exemplify the pliability of Coleridge's use of a person or persons in his poems.

Other observations made by Harper are not valid, since he says, "They are, for the most part, poems in which reference is made with fine particularity to certain places," and "They were composed as the expression of feelings which were occasioned by quite definite events" (p. 285). The verity of these statements may be seen by reading any of the conversation poems.

Harper describes the style of the poems in the following manner: "... they are among the supreme examples of a peculiar kind of poetry. Others not unlike them, though not surpassing them, are Ovid's 'Cum sibi illius vestibus nostis imago,' and several of the Canti of Leopardi. Some passages in Copper's 'Task' resemble them in tone. Poignancy of feeling, intimacy of address, and ease of expression are even more perfectly blended in Coleridge's poems than any of these" (p. 287).

Henry J. W. Milloy in an article entitled "Some Notes on Coleridge's 'olian Harp'" uses Theolian Harp as the archetype of the conversation poems and shows that Harper has failed to mention its originality of form
as compared with Coleridge's:

*The Task* is a long philosophical poem in several books; *The Solian harp* is a short poem in blank verse, starting in a conversational manner, rising to a climax of excited meditation, and returning in the end to the quiet conversational tone of the beginning. In form it obviously owes nothing to *The Task*; indeed, as far as I know, "The Solian harp" is the finest example of its kind in English literature. It was particularly suited to Wordsworth's needs in "Tintern Abbey," for in its effective use of blank verse for both the trivial and the profound, and in its single emotional curve, it achieved a confined spaciousness beyond the scope of a lyric.

To be sure, Harper did not say all that could be said about the conversation poems, but he did give birth to the idea of the conversation group.

Richard Hartog Fogle undertook to describe more fully Coleridge's conversation poems. He makes two exceptions to the list set forth by Harper. First, he omits *Poetical* *Ones*, since it is an irregular Pindaric ode, "a form which is not precisely adapted to conversational purposes" and since "it is a little too good for the genre of 'conversation poem,' which is essentially modest and limited in its claims."

Second, he is reluctant to include *To William Wordsworth* in the group; the poem is separated from the others by a period of eight years (p. 103).

Fogle considers the conversation poems as "Romantic efforts to combine naturalness with dignity and significance." On the one hand they are similar to the more formal eighteenth-century meditative poetry, which was written by Thomson, Alcato, Blair, Young, Collins, and Gray, and still they are informal like Horace's *Epistles* and *Satires*. In expressing feelings about nature and subjective experience, these poems
are unique. In fact, Fogle says, "These poems in some degree exploit
the random processes of a relaxed mind, in order to add a new dimension
and possibility to poetic subject-matter" (p. 106).

The emotions conveyed are "gentle," "quietistic," and "delicately
modulated." In giving dignity to the personal meditations of one in
even heavy circumstances, such as lying on a hilltop in The Soliloquies
or sitting beside a sleeping infant in Frost at Midnight, Coleridge
anticipates Wordsworth's Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey and The
Faulkner (pp. 106-107).

Providing both dignity and naturalness, blank verse is a suitable
verse form. The verse is Miltonic; "But," adds Fogle, "leveled from
Milton by Coleridge's characteristic softness, euphony, and flow."
Yet, because it is more "elaborately varied," and more "consciously
artful," it is more Miltonic than Wordsworth's comparable verse (p. 107).

While the conversation poems appear to have come "naturally" from
the poet's pen, they are "carefully wrought artifacts," notes Fogle,
and "they are a long way from modern experiments in the stream of
consciousness and automatic writing." He also observes that "they
have a center and a centrality, which generally come from a certain
philosophical idea used as a counterpoint to the concrete psychological
experience which makes the poem's wholesomeness and life" (pp. 106-107).

Structurally, these poems pass through an entire movement. The
movement is generally circular, and when Coleridge makes a "return" to
the starting-point, it includes that which he has learned. The ending,
then, is a synthesis as well as a return (pp. 109-111).
The theme of the conversation poems, according to Pagle, is "the
Romantic vision of unity and life," and their application is "for
blessedness and peace." By the "microglyphic symbolical of visible
natures" internal experience is communicated to a large extent (p. 167).
The poet, in his zeal to give dignity to the poems, has sometimes used a
style too artificial for his subject matter, i.e., *Reflections on Having Left
a Place of Retirement*, 11. 54-62, and Pagle turns these as instances of
"false grandeur." He considers the conversation poems "fine poetry
nevertheless, if not great poetry" (p. 164).

After this discussion of the thoroughgoing articles by Harper and
Pagle, little remains to be said concerning the conversation poems as a
group. The dates of the poems, however, cannot be overlooked. The
*Palace Exact*, written in 1795,22 and considered by Coleridge as "the
most perfect poem I ever wrote," begins the group. *Reflections on
Having Left a Place of Retirement* was also written in 1795. Then
*Lines upon Noon by Paedon* came in 1797, the year of Coleridge's great
mystery poems, *The Eve of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel. In
1793, *Eve of Midnight, Noon in Sulitude, and the Nighsturle* were
composed. Coleridge wrote *Reflections An Ape* in 1592, and although
the poem is an odo in form, its tone and imagery are no similar to that
of the conversation poems that I have included it in this study. *To
William Wordsworth* (1807), separated from the other poems by five years,
is panegyric in tone and shows but little use of visual imagery. For
these reasons, I, like Pagle, am reluctant to include it in the conversa-
tion group, which, with the exception of *Reflections An Ape*, is best
limited to those poems written between 1795 and 1793.

IV.

Any study of imagery is fraught with two difficulties. The writer may, in his zeal to impress the reader with the poem's minute, so isolate the imagery from the whole of the poem that the needed part-whole relationship is lost; the writer "murders to dissect." Or declaring that his readers see the interrelationship of the various images, he may bolster his point. This study represents an attempt to strike a balance between the two extremes. I have sought to examine the imagery in each poem both separately and in relation to the poem as a whole. The conversation poems are discussed under chapter headings indicative of the type of imagery they contain. The Pales myself, Ham and The Nightingale, for example, have central imagery, and serial imagery is used in This Lime-tree Bower and Pales, Reflections on having lost a Place of Retirement, and Frost at Midnight. Polar imagery or imagery of opposites is used in Songs of Solitude, and Reflections An Ode shows the use of multifarious imagery.

The artistic use of the visual image and its function as a unifying force are the focal point, and if the reader, with a greater critical acuity, understands and appreciates Coleridge's conversation poems, the purpose of this study will have been accomplished.
Notes to Chapter One


3. Fergo, pp. 34-35.


12. See Milley's article for a thorough discussion of the date.
Chapter Two — The Central Image

I.

The central image, as the name suggests, is the visual image which holds the reader's attention throughout the entire poem. It may appear concretely as the group of images clustered about the harp in The Bolian Harp, or it may be implicit as it sometimes is in The Nightingale. At any rate, The Bolian Harp and The Nightingale are the two poems in which Coleridge employs the central image, and although he uses it differently in the two poems, the end-result is always the same—the central image unifies the poem.

II.

Interest in the Bolian harp arose first in the early eighteenth century, James Thomson in The Castle of Indolence (1748), being the first to write about it; and it became a popular instrument soon widely in music shops and in window showcases. To Christopher Smart in An Inscription on an Aeolian Harp, the Bolian harp was something "which, tho' untouched" can "... rapturous strains impart/ Of genuine nature, free from art." Thomson had described the music of the Bolian harp in The Castle of Indolence:
Each sound too hero to languishment inclined,
Lulled the weak bosom, and induced ease,
Aerial music in the warbling wind,
At distance rising oft, by small degrees,
Heaven and nearer ease, till o'er the trees
It hung, and breathed such soul-dissolving air
As did, alas! with soft perfidious place;
Entangled deep in its enchanting出现,
The listening heart forgot all action and all cares.

A certain music, never known before,
Lulled the pensive melancholy mind;
Full easily obtained. Behoves no care,
But sidelong to the gently-swaying wind
To lay the well-tuned instrument reclined;
From thine, with airy flying fingers light,
Beyond each mortal touch the most refined,
The god of winds drew sounds of deep delight.
Chance, with just cause, The Harp of Acclius it bight.

Ah not! what hand can touch the strings so fine?
The up the lofty diapason roll.
Such sweet, such soft, such solemn airs divine,
Then let them down again into the soul?
Now rising love they formed; now pleasing dole
They breathed, in tender musings, through the heart;
And now a graver sacred strain they stole,
As when seraphic hands an hymn impart:
Wild warbling nature all, above the reach of art.

Collins in his "Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson" envisioned the placing
of Thomson's harp in a Thames reed-bed:

In you deep bed of whispering reeds
Like airy harp shall now be laid,
That he, those heart in sorrow bleeds,
May love through life the soothing shade.

Then maid and youths shall linger here,
And while its sounds at distance swell,
Shall sadly seem in Pity's ear
To hear the woodland pilgrim's song.

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore
When Thames in summer wreathes is dressed,
And oft suspend the dashing oar,
To bid his gentle spirit rest."
Gray had asked, “Did you never observe, while rocking winds are piping loud, that pause, as the gust is recollecting itself, and rising upon the air in a shrill and plaintive note, like the swell of an Aeolian Harp?” and continued, “I do assure you there is nothing in the world so like the voice of a spirit.” Macpherson described the harp in the following manner: “The blast came rustling through the hall, and gently touched my harp. The sound was mournful and low, like the song of the toad” (Grigson, pp. 30-31).

The Selden music, delightful with its variety, rise and fall, swell and diminuendo, stimulated the eighteenth century writers, but it was not until 1795, in Coleridge’s The Selden Harp, that the harp image was used as one by which, according to Grigson, “the deepest relations in the duality of man and nature can be explored.” Grigson refers to The Selden Harp as the locus classicus of the harp image (p. 24).

The other romantics besides Coleridge alluded to the Selden harp: Shelley, for example, in Prometheus Unbound wrote: “‘Ioan! . . . . What is that awful sound?’—Pantheon: ‘It is the deep music of the rolling world, kindling within the strings of the waved air, Aeolian modulations.’” The eighteenth century poets made rather lengthy allusions to the Selden harp and had even written poems about it. Coleridge, more than any of his contemporaries, continued in the harp tradition set up by the eighteenth century poets, when he wrote The Selden Harp, a poem which gives the harp image a majestic strength and beauty.

Coleridge regards the harp fully in a set of five images. The first
image (II. 13-25) is that of an actual lute in the poet's window. In the second (II. 26-29), life represents the harp, and the world of nature is the harp (II. 30-33). The poet is the instrument or the harp in the fourth image (II. 34-43), and finally, "all of animated nature" is seen as separate harps (II. 44-48). As an artist sometimes works, drawing first a simple sketch and moving gradually into more complex and abstract designs, so Coleridge begins the poem with "... that simplest lute... Placed lengthways in the sleeping casement..." and with ease shows the Eolian harp in more complex relationships which culminate in the "Eolian Visitations" passage (II. 44-48).

Like the ancient Druids, who erected monolithic stones, each of which helped complete the circular, ceremonial design at Stonehenge, Coleridge elaborates on the Eolian harp through this set of five images. Central to the poem is the Eolian lute, and outside of these five images showing various aspects of the lute, the rest of the poem by tone and by mood sets the scene for the poet's thoughts concerning the lute. The poem opens, for instance, with a twilight description of Coleridge's Clevedon cottage,

I lay passive, bare thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing must it be
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'angrown
With white-flow'er'd Jassine, and the broad-leaf'd Myrtle,
(Most emblems they of Innocence and Love)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (much should Wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatch'd from yon bean-field! and the world so hush'd!
The stillly murmur of the distant sea
Tells us of silence. (II. 1-12)
The visual imagery in those opening lines is simple and straightforward, as Coleridge points on airy scene of passive tranquility. The scene could perhaps be better understood through a careful look at the images Coleridge has chosen. The first two lines depict the poet and his wife sitting quietly beside their Gwelodan cottage. The cottage is next seen "decorum with white-flower'd Jasmin, and the broad-leaf'd Myrtle." The Jasmin is an "emblem . . . of Innocence." In "white-flower'd" Coleridge may have wanted to distinguish the Jasmin from the yellow variety and to strengthen its connection to innocence. The Myrtle is a symbol of love and was considered sacred to Venus. "Broad-leaf'd" was chosen to describe the Myrtle; the term is very descriptive, since it emphasizes the reaching-out of love. The idea that love entails a going out of self in concern for another is inherent in Coleridge's philosophy of life.

The poet next draws the reader's attention upward to the sky:

"Watch the clouds, that late were rich with light, / Slow saddening round." "Saddening" is apparently a key to this image. The New English Dictionary defines this use of "saddening" as meaning "to become sad or gloomy." The other denotative meaning given the word, "a rendering dull or dark colored," seems to be more nearly what the poet meant. Coleridge notes the change from light to dark, from the sun-lshed to the night-laden clouds. The rule of night is properly established in the lines, "And mark the star of eve/ Serenely brilliant." The bright evening star, contracted by the black night sky, is joined to wisdom in the parentheses, "(Such should Wisdom be)." With an olfactory image and an
auditory image, Coleridge completes the introduction.

Having put the reader in possession of the poem's setting,

Coleridge proceeds to the central image—the Bolian lute:

> And that simplest Lute,
> Placed lengthways in the clasping casement, hark!
> How by the desultory broose caress'd,
> Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
> It pears such sweet upbraiding, so must needs
> Tempt to repeat the wrong!

(The reader must visualize a “clasping casement” or a casement encircling or coining to embrace the lute. The strings are plucked at random by the broose. The “clasping casement,” as well as the broose that “caress’d,” are personified, and the simile of the “coy maid half yielding to her lover” naturally follows: the presence of Sara seems to anticipate these images. The lute is again seen in a sight-sound image in “It pears such sweet upbraiding, so must needs/ Tempt to repeat the wrong!” The personification of the harp and the broose gives a visual quality to this image.

Coleridge continues with the lute image in broader strokes. As opposed to the caressing “desultory” broose, a sequacious rising and falling is expressed:

> And now, its strings
> Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
> Over delicious surges sink and rise.

(11. 17-19)

This calls to the poet's mind a comparison which constitutes one of the finest images in the poem:

> Such a soft floating witchery of sound
> As twilight Elfin voices when they at soo
> Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
> Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
For pause, nor perch, hovering on untrod wing! (12. 20-25)

Here Coleridge has most exactly followed his formula for poetry. His "sense of musical delight" is coupled with and further defines the meaning of those lines. Grignon, the himself came an Eolian harp,

called those lines "a piece of the I.e.a. of Eolian harping, saved by Coleridge's genius" (p. 23). Each image is reminiscent of Fairyland.
The gales, like a magic carpet, are vehicles of travel for the Elfinia.
The flowers are "honey-dropping," melodies are "footless" and "wild" here. The ideas of "footless" and "wild" are subtly extended as the melodies are compared to "birds of Paradise," which "for pause, nor perch, hovering on untrod wing." Further proof of the superior imagery in these lines may be found in the inferior draft for the edition of 1797, which reads:

And now its strings

Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
Over delicious Sanges sink and rise
In airy voyage, Music such as said
Round rosy bowers (so Legendaries told)
To sleeping Muses are floating wayingly
By vernal wing that winds stolen from Peary land

There on some magic Hybla Melodies
Round may a modest honey-dropping Flower

Footless and wild, like Birds of Paradise,

For pause, nor perch, warbling on untrod wing.

The images which follow the fairylike passage lie almost totally

within the realm of the abstract. In December, 1794, Coleridge wrote to Southey, "I am a complete necessitarian... and believe the corporeality of thought, namely that it is motion." Here that philosophical concept is expressed:
Of the one Life within us and abroad,
which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where— (ll. 28-29)

In this passage, frequently called the "one Life" passage, it seems as
if Coleridge is showing the unity of living beings, and although it is
abstractly expressed, he seems to compare those beings to the lute.
This is shown in the line, "which meets all motion and becomes its soul."
In inverse form, Coleridge is saying that motion acts upon the "one Life
within us and abroad," and this is much as the breeze was shown to act
upon the subject lute. The next line expresses the relation of light to
sound, and the line, "Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where—,
recalls the lute image.

This abstract use of imagery finds its culmination in the lines:

Nothing, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so full'd
Where the breeze varibles, and the mute still air
Is music aumbering on her instrument. (ll. 30-33)

The excellence of these lines may be seen by comparing them with a
version published in the Sibylline Leaves (1837), which reads:

Nothing it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world like this,
There even the breezes, and the same air,
Contain the power and spirit of harmony. (E. H. Coleridge, p. 101)

The Sibylline version is an example of imagery in which the poet is
telling the reader everything. On the other hand, "where the breeze
varibles, and the mute still air/ Is music aumbering on her instrument"
is an example of a subtle visual presentation. Breeze is personified by
the verb "varibles"; the equation of the "mute still air" to "Music
altralx & isg on te InsiTistnnt'' restates ths lute imge.

Subjectively, Coleridge says,

And thus, my Lute! as on the midtry slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eye-lids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity,
Full many a thought uncall'd and unattended,
And many idle fleeting phantasmal,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject Lute! (11. 24-49)

Coleridge uses images to compare himself with the harp, and he does so in a picture verified by accuracy. So pictures himself lying on a hillside at noon; through "half-closed eye-lids" sunbeams would appear to "dance," "like diamonds, on the main." Thoughts cross the poet's mind: "As wild and various as the random gales; That swell and flutter on this subject Lute!" The poet is a passive instrument and like "this subject Lute." Thoughts cross his mind in a desultory manner, even as the "random gales" act upon the Lute. This passage, which accentuates the lute image, leads more rapidly to the poet's philosophizing in:

And that is all of animated nature
Do but organic Harps diversely framed,
That traverse into thought, as other than streams
Plastic and void, one intellectual stream,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all? (11. 44-46)

In this "Solemn Visitation" passage, the harp image is extended to include all of "animated nature." Although somewhat abstractly, this idea was suggested in the "one Life" passage. Here the idea is fully pressed into the form of a question and vividly illustrated in the use of visual imagery. This passage climaxes the pyramidal climb of visual
images centered around the Saxon harp. Coleridge has moved from the
lute in his cottage cottage, first played upon by a delectory breeze
and later, a sequacious one, to the "one Life" passage, where he connects
"Life" with the lute and "motion" with the breeze. He then pictured
himself on the hillside, where his mind became the passive lute and his
thoughts, "as the random gales." Coleridge completes the line of images
by looking upon all of "animated nature" as "organic Harpe diversely
formed" and the breeze, in this case, as "one intellectual Broome."

Beginning with a specific harp, Coleridge related his feelings to it
and applied the "Saxon Visititation" image to it.

In the last passage, the falling action comes in Coleridge's
direct manner to Sara's reproach:

But thy more serious eye a mild reproach
Darts, O beloved heart! nor such thoughts
Dim and unwholesome dost thou not reject,
And hiddest no walk humbly with my God.

Hark! Daughter in the family of Christ!
Wilt thou now fail and hold on undisgraced
These changings of the uncovenanted mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break:
On vain Philosophy's eye-building spring.

For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incorruptible! save thee with thee
I praise him, and with Faith that only seems;
Who with his saving mercies healed me
A sinful and most miserable man.

Wilt thou, or dost thou, and give me to possess
Peace, and this God, and thou, heart-honour'd Moll? (II. 49-64)

Coleridge calmly, yet majestically, voices his faith, since Sara has
condemned him for his metaphysical musings, and in so pacifying Sara,
Coleridge creates a quiet ending to the poem—one that would not detract
from the central image. The poet's thankfulness for "Peace, and this God,
and there, heart-honour'd Maid" is reminiscent of the introduction and tends to further unify the poem.

Coleridge considered *The Rolian Harp* as "the most perfect poem I ever wrote." George Melchior Harper regarded it as "his first important and at the same time characteristic poem," and Milloy says that "Coleridge in *The Rolian Harp* for the first time, for himself, discovered the countryside, and that this new influence gave him a lyrical intensity, enriched his imagery, stimulated his thought, and made his verse 'fluid and easy'" (p. 362).

Improving with the beauty of his surroundings at Glastonbury, Coleridge wrote to Thomas Fodle: "...So we settled, my, quite domesticated, at Glastonbury, our comfortable cot! ... The prospect would in perhaps more varying than any in the kingdom. Nine eye glimmering the sea, the distant inland, the opposite coast, I shall soon write rhymes, let the nine lines prevent it if they can."

Shortly afterwards he wrote *The Rolian Harp*, and regard it so one will, the poem, marked by an artistic use of the harp as a central image, denotes the beginning of the creditable conversation group.

The nightingale is traditionally a poetic subject, and Coleridge in *The Nightingale* seeks to prove that his subject is not a melancholy song bird, for "In Nature there is nothing melancholy." Although the poem is about the nightingale's music, Coleridge uses eight images to
prove his proposition. Concretely expressed, the unifying image is the
nightingale's music, and all of the secondary images derive their meaning
from a relationship to this pivotal or central image. The images that
revolve about the nightingale are like the moveable figures that allow
store windows at Christmas; one by one they appear and contribute their
part to the Christmas story, and they are significant only as a part of
the complete theme.

The opening lines of *The Nightingale* reveal the setting—a suitable
place for the poet's reflections on the bird:

No cloud, no relic of the sunken day
Distinguishes the lust, no long thin slip
Of mullen light, no obscure trembling hue.
Came, we will rest on this old mossy bridge,
You see the glimmer of the stream beneath,
But hear no murmuring; it flows silently,
Over its soft bed of verdure. All is still,
A b looking night! and though the stars be dim,
Yet let us think upon the vocal choicest
That gladden the green earth, and we shall find
A pleasure in the silence of the stars. (11. 1-11)

The sun is not seen here, yet three kinds of sunsets are enumerated:
first, a glancing cloud is suggested as it "distinguishes the West";
second, a "long thin slip of mullen light" hints of a sunset similar to
the one in *Forna in Solitude*, where "the light has lost the summit of
the hill,/ Though still a sunny zone lies beautiful,/ And all the island
beacon"; third, the "obscure trembling hue" reveal a sunset with a
darkening diffusion of color. But the sun has already set, and instead
of enjoying twilight activity, the poet's thoughts are turned to delight
in the numinos of night and the nightingale.

Floating beneath the bridge a silent stream attracts his attention,
and Coleridge tells his friends, Dorothy and William Wordsworth, "Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge!" The silent motion of the stream beneath suggests the "soft bed of verdure" over which it flows; this is Coleridge's first mention of greenness. The night is still, and the poet uses subdued imagery. The stars are dimmed by the shadows of clouds, and Coleridge tells his friends, "Yet let us think upon the vernal showers/ That gladden the green earth, and we shall find/ A pleasure in the dimness of the stars." In these lines the poet expresses the cause-effect relationship of the rain acting upon the earth to make it green. He provides a relationship between this image and the preceding one in which he saw the stream flowing over "its soft bed of verdure." The "vernal showers" may be likened to the stream, and the "green earth," to the "bed of verdure."

The serene nighttime activity has filled the poet's heart with joy, and it is in this mood that the poem continues:

And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,
'Most radical, most melancholy' bird!
A melancholy bird? Gi! idle thought!
In Nature there is nothing melancholy. (12. 12-15)

The Nightingale image appears, but it is short-lived. The poet is eager to defend the bird, and in stating his thesis, "In Nature there is nothing melancholy," Coleridge recalls the solemnness of the evening.

Those guilty of calling the Nightingale a melancholy bird are put to trial in the following lines:

But some night-wandering men whose heart was pierced
With the remembrance of a gracious wrong,
Or slow distemper, or neglected love,
(And so, poor wretch! filled all things with himself,
And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale)
Of his own survey he, and such as he, first named these notes a melancholy strain.
And now a poet echoes the concord: Poet the hath been building up the rhyme then he had better far have stretched his limbs Beside a break in mossy forest-dell, By sun or moon-light, to the influences Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements Surrounding his whole spirit, of his song And of his fame forgotfull, so his fame Should share in Nature's immortality,
A venereal thing! and so his song Should make all Nature lovelier, and itself.
Be loved like Nature! But 'twill not be so;
And youths and maidens most poetical,
The see the deepening twilights of the spring In ball-rooms and hot theatres, they still Full of mock sympathy must leave their sighs
Glor Philomela's pity-pleading strains. (11: 16-39)

The poet away from nature takes up the misinformed man's melancholy song, and Coleridge placés him in an image which recalls The Golden Heen image of the poet's passive rest at noon. In each instance an individual is seen reclining while he has an aesthetic experience with nature. In keeping with the tone of The Nightingale, this individual rests "beside a break in mossy forest-dell"—an image approaching the one of the "mossy bridge" and the "stream" mentioned in the opening lines. The poet would also rest "by sun or moon-light." Having had an experience with nature, he would share his feelings with others by his song which "should make all Nature lovelier." "But 'twill not be so," Coleridge says, and in an image of almost oratorical quality he sees youths, also away from nature, who sigh over the bird's "pity-pleading strains." The "night-sounding" men, the poet, and the youths are to blame for calling the nightingale a "most musical, most melancholy" bird, and although the nightingale does not appear as an
Image in this section, it is present in the poet's thoughts, since he defends the bird against the appellation.

In contrast to the youths and maidens in hot theatres and ballrooms, Coleridge turns to William and Dorothy Wordsworth and says,

My Friend, and thou, our Sister! we have learnt
A different lore: we may not thus profane
Nature's sweet voices, always full of love
And joyance! 'Tis the merry Nightingale
That croaks, and warbles, and precipitates
With soft thick untune his delicious notes,
As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-song, and distill his full soul
Of all its music. (11. 40-49)

"We have learnt a different lore," he tells his friends, and he may be recalling the reclining image he just mentioned, or he may be referring to the three of them as they sit on the mossy bridge. He is emphasizing the difference between their experiences and their attitude toward the nightingale and those of the three when he discussed previously. The nightingale image is expanded, since the poet pictures it as it "croaks" and "warbles" and "precipitates"; these active words depict the quickness and activity of the bird. Eagerly and soulfully, the bird utters its joyous song.

Having presented the chief image of the poem, Coleridge in the next section describes nightingales within a grove:

And I knew a grove
Of large extent, hard by a castle huge,
Which the great lord inhabited not; and so
This grove is wild with tangling underwood,
And the twin valleys are broken up, and grass,
Thin grass and king-cups grow within the paths.
But never elsewhere in one place I knew
So many nightingales; and far and near,
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,
They answer and provoke each other's song,
With alarum and capricious passagings,
And murmurs musical and swift jug jug,
And one low piping sound more sweet than all—
Stirring the air with such a harmony,
That should you close your eyes, you might almost
Forgot it was not day! On moonlight bushes,
Those deaf leaflets are but half-desclosed,
You may perceive behold them on the twigs,
Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,
Glistening, while may a glow-worm in the shade
Lights up her love-torch. (ll. 49–59)

This grove, unlike the garden in Shelley's The Sensitive Plant, which
became ugly when its caretaker died, literally became nature's own
habitat when the castle was deserted. Underbrush, grass, and king-cups
(or buttercups) grow and give a wild aspect to the once "tame" grove, and
the grove is a delightful place for the nightingales. With both sound
and visual imagery the activity of the nightingales is shown: "They
answer and provoke each other's song, with alarum and capricious
passagings, and murmurs musical and swift jug jug, and one low piping
sound more sweet than all—" The harmony of these birds is so great
that "should you close your eyes, you might almost forget it was not
day!" With this Coloridge describes nightingales at night by using
light-dark images. The description is well drawn: moonlight shines on
the bushes, and dew on the leaflets causes them individually to sparkle;
nightingales perch on twigs, and their "bright" eyes glisten: "a
glow-worm in the shade lights up her love-torch."

"A most gentle word" is seen in relation to the nightingales in the
following section of the poem:
A most gentle Maid,
the dweloth in her hospitable home
hard by the castle, and at latest eve
(Even like a lady vowed and dedicate
To something more than Nature in the grove)
Gladest through the pathways, she knows all their Notes,
That gentle maid, and oft, a moment's space,
That time the moon was lost behind a cloud,
Hath heard a pause of silence; till the moon
Emerging, hath awakened earth and sky
With one sensation, and these wakful birds
Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,
As if some sudden gale had swept at once
A hundred airy harps! And she hath watched
Hear a nightingale perch giddily
On blossomy tree still swinging from the breeze,
And to that motion tune his wanton song
Like tipsy day that reels with tossing head. (11. 69-96)

The scene for this narrative description has already been set. The
castle, the grove, the pathways, and the nightingales have been seen in
their respective places, and the maiden's home, like the grove, is
located "hard by" the castle. The imagery continues to be serene, and
by seeing the nightingale in joyous circumstances, Coleridge continues
his defense of the bird.

The maiden has an other-worldly appearance; she is "like a Lady
vowed and dedicate/To something more than Nature in the grove." The
fact that she "glides" enhances this supernatural aspect. The maiden
goes to the grove "at latest eve," and there she notices that whenever
a cloud hides the moon the nightingales are silent. When the moon
emerges, however, it awakens "earth and sky/ With one sensation," and
the birds sing "As if some sudden gale had swept at once/ A hundred
airy harps!" In this Coleridge has successfully combined sight with
sound images. Disappearance of the moon behind clouds, representative of
gloom or melancholy, in a sight image, and it acts to silence life below.
The moon's appearance makes the birds, earth, and sky vibrate with life and sound. The birds' spontaneous singing is like the response of "a hundred airy harps" to a sudden gale; this simile combines sound and visual imagery so that it is difficult to separate the one from the other.

The last thought in this section is an extension of the imagery found in "As if some sudden gale had swept at once/ A hundred airy harps!" The sudden has watched "Many a nightingale perch giddily/ On blossomy twig still swinging from the breez, / And to that motion tune his wonted song/ Like tipsy Joy that reels with tossing head." The breeze moves the twig on which the nightingale sits, and inspires his song in the same way that the "gale" acted upon the "airy harps." The action produced music. The nightingale is perched "giddily on blossomy twig," a detail adding a kinesthetic effect to the visual imagery. The personification, "tipsy Joy that reels with tossing head," emphasizes the joyful aspect of the bird and results in a kind of visual-abstract imagery.

The poet bids the birds farewell in the concluding section:

Farewell, 0 Warbler! till to-morrow we go,  
And you, my friends! farewell, a short farewell!  
We have been loitering long and pleasantly,  
And now for our dear homes.—That strain again!  
Full fain it would delay me! My dear babe,  
Who, capable of no articulate sound,  
Sure all things with his imitative lisp,  
Now he would place his hand beside his ear,  
Like little hand, the small forefinger up,  
And bid us listen! And I deem it wise  
To make him Nature's playmate. He knows well  
The evening-star and once, when he swoops  
In most distressful mood (some inward pain
Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream—)  
I hurried with him to our orchard-plot,  
And he beheld the moon, and, hushed at once,  
Suspends his steps, and laughs most silently;  
While his fair eyes, that gazed with unripped tears,  
did glitter in the yellow noon-beam;  
bell—  
It is a father's tale; But if that Heaven  
Should give no life, his childhood shall grow up  
Familiar with those songs, that with the night  
He may associate joy,—Once more, farewell,  
Sweet Nightingale! once more, my friend! farewell.  
(11. 37-40)

Seeing the moon, the maiden had observed, caused the nightingale to  
"burst forth in choral minstrelsy," and the moon has a similar effect  
on Coleridge's infant, since he quite crying and "laughs most silently."  
The infant's tear-filled eyes "glitter in the yellow noon-beam"; a  
similar light-dark effect occurs in 1. 65, when moonlight is seen  
playing on dew leaflets. The father's experience is told in imagery  
similar to that introduced earlier, but the tender situation demands a  
more delicate use of it. In conclusion, Coleridge wants his son to  
grow up "familiar with those songs," and this familiarity with the  
nightingale's music will cause the boy to associate joy with the night.  
On a note of pure joy, Coleridge again wishes a farewell to both the  
"Sweet Nightingale" and his friends.

The nightingale, though not always seen, is the poem's central  
image, and differs from the bodily harp, which, either concretely or  
abstractly, is always seen. If the nightingale is not openly shown when  
Coleridge discusses the night-wandering man, the poet, or the youths,  
the bird image becomes the more vivid in the following lines:

'Tis the merry Nightingale  
That crowds, and hurryes, and precipitates
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-sweet, and disburthen his full soul
Of all its music! (11. 43-49)

The nightingale, by any criteria, is central to the remainder of the
poem: nightingales are both seen and heard in a grove (11. 49-69); the
nightingales and the "gentle maid" who "knows all their notes" next
appear (11. 69-86); and the poet, hesitant to leave, soliloquises of his
infant who appreciates the nightingales and he hopes that his son will
grow up to associate joy with the bird (11. 87-110). Except then the
poet digresses somewhat to tell how the bird was called "melancholy,"
the poem's mood in light and joyous.

Referring to Coleridge's The Nightingale, Wordsworth wrote, "that
false notions have prevailed from generation to generation of the true
character of the nightingale. As far as my friend's poem, in the
Lyrical Ballads, is read, it will contribute greatly to rectify
these."

Correct "false notions" it may, but The Nightingale with
its rich imagery represents another milestone in the history of
nightingale poems.
Notes to Chapter Two


7. Henry J. W. Hilley, "Some Notes on Coleridge's 'Golden Harp,'" *ML* XXXII (1929), 373. Subsequent references to Hilley's article will be cited in the text.


Chapter Three — Serial Images

I.

A series of images linked together by a common thread of thought may be called serial images. Set within a framing picture, each serial image is reflective and constitutes a kind of nature picture. The serial pictures differ in development, ranging from the intricately developed "roaring doll" scene in *This Lime-tree House* to the singular view of the Frost performing its secret ministry in *Frost at Midnight*. Intricacy of treatment varies from poem to poem and from scene to scene within a single poem. Although each serial image is bound irrevocably to the poet's experiences and in some cases to a minor image within a part of the poem (such as the film in *Frost at Midnight*), by themselves they stand alone. Yet, when Coleridge supplies the connecting thread, the scenes blend together into a picture of varying hues, expressing love of nature, family, and friends.

II.

The lime-tree house provides a kind of framework for *This Lime-tree House*. From this beautiful vantage point in nature, Coleridge experiences a series of imaginings of his friends' journey. His imaginings
form pictures, and their deeper meaning comes to the surface in lines 59-67, when Coleridge philosophizes on nature. The poem may be considered a series of nature pictures—not mere photographs, but pictures which have a universal meaning as well as a pictorial quality.

The poem begins on a languid note,

Well, they are gone, and here I must remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
Beauty and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when ago
Had dim'd mine eyes to blindness! (1. 1-5)

Coleridge told Southey the exact circumstances of the writing of this poem, "The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb's stay, and still prevents me from all walks longer than a furlong. While Wordsworth, his sister, and Charles Lamb were out one evening, sitting in the arbour of T. Poole's garden, which communicates with mine, I composed these lines, with which I am pleased." In the poem Coleridge shows his disappointment at not being able to walk with his friends. The lime-tree bower, which he on other occasions enjoyed (and which is enjoyed later on in this poem), is envisioned as "my prison." He had lost "beauties and feelings," and the image of blindness in old age approaches the prison image. That is, the poet is saying that even when he is a prisoner behind blind eyes, he would have remembered those "beauties" and "feelings" that are now "lost" to him. This is an apparent hyperbole, which is elaborated when the poet says, "They, meanwhile, friends, than I never saw my meet again," and so on.

The poet despair of his prison house, yet his mind's eye is free
to see his friends,

On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Vander in gladness, and wind down, perchance.
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
The roaring dell, o'ercrowded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
There its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge—that branches ash,
Unsun'd and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
He'rear tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fann'd by the water-fall; and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank woods,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone. (ll. 7-20)

Here Coleridge not only gives a graphic view of the scene, but he
also, in fact, forces the reader to enter the dell and perceive what
it is like. His first visual images are general. The dell appears
"o'ercrowded," "narrow," and "deep." Because it is "only speckled by
the mid-day sun," Coleridge's friends, walking at twilight, see the
dell in varying shades of light. Instead of portraying the height of
the surrounding mountains in the dell image, Coleridge inversely presents
the "depth" and "narrowness" of the valley caused by the mountains.

Within the dell the ash tree is seen specifically with a slim
trunk which it "from rock to rock; Flings arching like a bridge." The
ash is "branchless," "unsun'd," and "damp." Coleridge looks closer at
the ash and its "few poor yellow leaves," that "He'rear tremble in the
gale, yet tremble still; Fann'd by the water-fall." Woods are placed
in a close proximity to the water-fall underneath "the dripping edge of
the blue clay-stone." A stream of water falls on the clay-stone which,
in turn, drips on the woods and causes them militantly "all at once ...
In this first picture that Coleridge has created, several things may be noted concerning his technique. First, Coleridge views his friends on the mountaintop and traces their steps downward over the "springy heath" to the valley. The valley is the subject of this picture. Second, the poet moves from the general visual image of the doll to the single ash tree. From the ash tree, he moves to a description of a few of its leaves. Then he shows the waterfall, and finally, the woods beneath the clay-stone are seen. Throughout this movement of composition, Coleridge has used detailed description often with color, such as the "yellow leaves," the "dark green woods," and the "blue clay-stone." In spite of his undesirable prison, Coleridge has seen much.

The poet sees his friends continuing their walk:

Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide heavens—and view again
The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
Of purple shades! Yest they wander on
In gladness all; (ll. 20-27)

The scene is now a topographical one. Along with the view of the fields, meadows, and the sea, Coleridge obliquely depicts a twilight sail boat on the lake with two mountains in the background. This is seen in the lines, "whose sails light up/ The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles/ Of purple shades!" The "Isles of purple shades" are the almost corporeal shadows that the mountains make on the water.
"slip of smooth clear blue" between the "Isles of purple shade"
indicates a lack of shadow due to the valley between the two mountains.
This is a lovely topographical view with light and shadow playing upon
the sail boat, the lake, and the mountains, as well as upon the scene
as a whole.

An interjection interrupts further description of the scene:

but then, overflowing, most glad,

by gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hunger'd after Nature, many a year;
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange solemnity! (11. 26-32)

There is little visual imagery here outside of Lamb's desiring nature
when he was "in the great City pent." Commenting on the artistic effect
of this passage, Foglo says that "the effect, indeed, verges on bathos,
an example of incautious excess in a legitimate attempt to convey the
need of quiet, delicate solemnity."3 In spite of Foglo's rather severe
judgment, he is forced to commend the next Lamb digression (11. 37-43)
as being a poetic peak in the conversation piece (p. 103). The poem,
no more than Byron's Don Juan, is marred by its intrusions. Although
the visual effect of these lines is slight, successive digressions on
Lamb form a thread of connecting imagery.

Coleridge returns to the scene before his mind's eye when he
implorces the sun,

All slowly sink:

Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Yo purple heath-flower, richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
And kindle, thou blue Ocean! (11. 32-37)
This picture is accomplished with brief strokes. The sun moving towards the horizon is first seen, and in calling it "glorious," the poet has not only supplied the connotation of brightness and color, but also gives the feeling of bigness or greatness. From the sun downward, the poet makes vertical strokes with the "slant beams," which he connects to the "purple heath-flowers." In telling the heather to "shine," he has shown the pallid, yet substantial effect of the sun's rays, as they enliven the flowers. In "richlier burn, ye clouds," he gives the clouds body and color and also places them in the proximity of the sun.

"The distant groves" occupy the middle ground of this picture, and their color is found in the admonition, "Live in the yellow light." A command, "And kindle, thou blue Ocean!" completes the picture: here an active verb, "kindle," also suggests color. The landscape seen illuminated throughout these lines and especially the purple heath flowers point toward the culmination of the image in the following lines:

So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with smiling sense, you gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily, and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence. (11. 37-43)

Coleridge included these lines in a letter to Thalwall, in which he wrote: "my mind feels as if it asked to behold and knew something great, something one and indivisible. And it is only in the faith of that that rocks or waterfalls, mountains or caverns, give no the sense of sublimity or majesty! But in this faith all things counterfeit.
infinity" (Fogle, p. 103). Fogle comments on this passage, "Here he rises to the realm of the life-in-such of absolute reality, where material and ideal are reconciled in pure Being, where the symbol becomes its own meaning. The conversational poems do not generally fly so high, though there are other comparable passages" (p. 103).

The landscape made a profound impression on Coleridge, and he hopes that Lamb will have a similar experience.

The scene now shifts back to the lime-tree bower:

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd
Much that has sooth'd me. Pale beneath the bough
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watch'd
Some broad and sunny leaf, and lov'd to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above
Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
Was richly ting'd, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy, which unbars
Those fronting arms, and now, with blackest hue
Nakes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilights, and though now the bat
Whistles silent by, and not a swallow twittors
Yet still the solitary humble-bee
Sings in the bean-flower! (12. 43-59)

Earlier Coleridge had shifted attention from himself and his unhappy condition to his friends (especially Charles Lamb): his empathy prepared him for the "delight" in this section. He is now ready to enjoy his prison—the lime-tree bower.

In this picture, Coleridge sees the sun, referred to as the "bough," which makes "pale" the "transparent foliage." From foliage in general, the poet next looks at the individual leaf, "broad" and "sunny." In the "roaring dell" picture, Coleridge pictured the "few poor yellow
leaves . . . swum'd by the waterfall," so in this scene he shows "The shadow of the leaf and stem above dappling its sunshine." The walnut-tree is "richly tinged." In describing the "deep radiance" on the ivy, Coleridge has created a picture of some depth: the reader must visualize the light reflected from the wax-like leaves, which are patterned against the elm trees. The light from the sun contrasts the "blackest mass" of the ivy with the "dark branches" of the elm trees and makes them "glisten a lighter hue." A bat in flight and the "humble-bee" in the bee-flower complete this picture of the poet's lime-tree bower. Light and dark imagery, used in varying degrees, reveal this scene of solitude in late twilight.

Having responded to nature, the poet concludes:

Henceforth I shall know
That nature never deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow, but nature there;
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty, and sometimes
His will to be bereft of promised good,
That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share. (II. 57-67)

Although disappointed because he could not join his friends on their walk, the poet called before his mind pictures of the scenes his friends would be viewing, and he related the past and present joys that come from viewing his lime-tree bower. His conclusion is inevitable: be it a narrow plot or a vacant waste, nature is present to "keep the heart awake to Love and Beauty." This experience finds reconciliation in the fact that the poet is able to call up visual images to his mind's eye; this compensates for his being "bereft of promised good." With joy
Again Coleridge's thoughts turn to Lamb, and he says,

"By gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rock
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! dooming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in Light)

Had crossed the mighty Orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or, when all was still,
Flow croaking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to then
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life. (11. 68-76)"

Here the poet sees a rock or rocks, and he wishes that Lamb might, from the hilltop, see one flying between him and the fading sun, or that he might hear one overhead, and finally, he remarks that to Lamb, "No sound is dissonant which tells of Life." This remark, along with the fact that Lamb had been "many a year, in the great City post," gives insight into Coleridge's special attention to Lamb throughout the poem.

When Coleridge lived in London, he "sox nought lovely but the sky and stars," as he says in Front At Midnight (l. 53); and having come to the Lake District and Clivendon, he wrote, "mine eye glutonizes the sea, the distant islands, the opposite coast ..." Coleridge likened Lamb's experience away from nature to his own and expected him to react to it in a similar fashion.

Imagery in This Lime-tree Bower my Prison follows two trains of thought, the real and the imaginary. More specifically, it could be called serial imagery of place and person. The forming image of Coleridge in his Lime-tree Bower, a real situation, is interwoven with Coleridge's imaginings of his friend's journey. A summary of the serial scenes reveals the poem's organization: the poet, disappointed at having to
remain in the lime-tree bower (ll. 1-5), sees his friends' journey through the pictures of his mind's eye, namely the "roaring doll" (ll. 5-20), a topographical scene (ll. 20-26), and sunset from the mountaintop (ll. 26-32). As the poem progresses, the bower becomes a place where Coleridge can enjoy beauty, and he depicts the bower (ll. 43-59). With cathartic feelings he concludes that nature is present everywhere to the wise and pure (ll. 59-67). On three occasions his thoughts turn especially to Lamb (ll. 26-32; 37-43; 63-76), and he hopes that Lamb is enjoying the various scenes.

Each serial view is a separate entity. Unlike the central image which is elaborated throughout successive images, the serial images are connected in a very general way to their subject matter. The topographical scene, for example, stands apart from and even forms a contrast with the preceding roaring doll picture, and the following image of sunset from the mountaintop stands complete in itself. Here we have, as it were, a series of pictures illustrative of Coleridge's friends' walk. The painter Hogarth sought to depict eighteenth century life through a series of pictures, and as a result, individual pictures such as "The Contract" reveal his criticism. "The Contract" picture, however, when properly placed within the "Marriage À La Mode" set is an important scene in Hogarth's story. In a similar manner views of his friends' walk, of Lamb, and scenes of his lime-tree bower are interwoven and form a series of pictures adeptly painted by Coleridge.
III.

The verbal imagery in "Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement" is joined together by a relationship to the poet's cottage, his "place of retirement." Brief and picturesque, the images could be compared to a series of short-shots in a film. Each view, whether it be of the cottage or the "wealthy son of Commerce" or even of the tearful housed, marks a progression in the poet's reflections.

The poem begins with a description of the poet's cottage:

Lou was our pretty Cot: our tallest Rose
Peep'd at the chamber-window. He could hear
At silent noon, and eve, and early morn,
The Sea's faint murmur, In the open air
Our Myrtles blossom'd; and across the porch
Thick Jasmine trained: the little Landscape round
Was green and woody, and refresh'd the eye,
It was a spot which you might aptly call
The Valley of Seclusion! (11. 1-9)

With the brief strophe, Coleridge draws the images contained within the first two lines. He first shows the "pretty Cot" in "Lou was our pretty Cot." This stroke is a downward vertical one, and he reverses this in the second image, since the rose may be seen sprouting upward. In "tallest" he press on the idea that this is a rose among roses, and "peep'd" animates the flower.

Further details of the loveliness of the cottage are given in the descriptions of the myrtles and jasmine. In The Bogan Hymn, Coleridge suggested that the myrtle was symbolic of love, and as the "broad-lov'd Myrtle" in The Bogan Hymn led to the idea of the reaching-out of love, similarly the myrtle's blossoming "In the open air" suggests that love
needs freedom and light in order that it reach its fullest maturity.
The jasmin, associated with innocence in The Golden House, is seen "across the porch." In the former poem, Coleridge expressed the profusion of jasmin and myrtle by saying that the cottage was "o'ergrown" with them, and he expresses a profusion of flowers in "Thick Jasmin." The use of "little landscape" approximates Keats's "little hill" in the line, "I stood tiptoe upon a little hill." This is a weakness. The adjectives, "green" and "woody," are also ordinary, and "refresh'd the eye" is the best image in the passage.

The poet goes on to say that this spot could aptly be called "The Valley of Seclusion." He has chosen the word, "Seclusion," which means approximately the same as the word "Retirement" in the title of the poem.

An admirer of the cottage next appears,

Once I saw
(Halloring his Sabbath-day by quietness)
A wealthy son of Commerce saunter by,
Brisbane's citizen, he thought, it calmed
His thirst of idle gold, and made him wise
With wiser feelings. (ll. 9-14)

Here Coleridge begins his interpretation of one who might be called a nineteenth century "Richard Cory." Unlike Cory, who in soon downtown, this was "saunter by" Coleridge's cottage on a Sunday. Robinson expressed material wealth in his description of Cory, who "glittered when he walked," whereas Coleridge in more staid imagery sees "A wealthy son of Commerce" and "Brisbane's citizen." Nothing of the desperate end of Cory is seen in Brisbane's citizen, who rather becomes more thoughtful. Coleridge now tells the reader that has caused him to
speak of the man as he has in the previous lines,

For he paused, and looked
With a pleased sadness, and gasped all around,
Then eyed our Cottage, and gasped round again,
And sighed, and said, it was a Blessed Place.
And so were blessed. (11. 14-16)

Throughout these lines the poet has maintained his image through the use of the verbs, "paused," "looked," "gasped," "eyed," "gasped again," "sighed," and "said." It is almost as if Coleridge were viewing the man from out of his cottage window and telling Sara, minute by minute, what the man is doing. The "pleased sadness" seems to possess an affinity to the citizen's musings "with wiser feelings" in the previous lines, and it can best be understood in that connection. As in The Ancient Mariner Coleridge would have the wedding guest become "a sadder and a wiser man" (p. 203), so in this antecedent poem he less obviously stresses the sadder-wiser aspect of the citizen.

A series of sound images with a visual image appearing parenthetically are found in the next section of the poem:

Off with patient ear
Long-listening to the voiceless skylark's note
(Voiless, or haply for a moment seen
Gleaming on sunny wings) in whisper'd tones
I've said to my beloved, 'such, sweet girl!
The inobtrusive song of happiness,
Uncarthly minstrelsy! then only heard
When the soul seeks to hearken; then all is hush'd,
And the heart listens!' (11. 18-26)

The skylark impressed Coleridge much in the same way that their cottage interested the wealthy merchant. The cottage, "a Blessed Place," caused the merchant's thoughts to rise above the material plane. The skylark's song likewise causes Coleridge's thoughts to soar, since it
boscoats joy in its "uncouthly minstrelsy."

In the next set of visual images, Coleridge moves away from his cottage up the mountain:

But the time, then first
From that low dell, steep up the story height
I climb'd with perilous toil and reach'd the top,
On that a goodly scene! Here the bleak mount,
The bare black mountain speckled thin with sheep;
Gray clouds, that shadowing spot the sunny fields;
And river, now with bushy rocks o'er-bound,
Now winding bright and full, with naked banks;
And seats, and lanes, the Abbey and the wood,
And cots, and hamlets, and faint city-spires;
The Channel thence, the Islands and white sails,
Dim coast, and cloud-like hills, and shoreless Ocean— (ll. 26-37)

From this topographical position, the poet first takes a look about him at "the bare black mountain speckled thin with sheep," and D. G. James remarked about this simple scene: "Only once do we find any enjoyment, in the manner of Wordsworth, in that is black, bare, exposed, and wind-swept; but in the poem in which this occurs . . . the feeling gather

for the most part around the 'pretty Cot' in a 'Valley of Seclusion' from which the excursion to the mountain was made; the 'bare black
mountain' would, to sum up, be hardly tolerable to Coleridge were it not for the nearness of a secluded headquarters for such excursion."

The scene of barrenness is brief, for Coleridge next goes skyward, where he makes an affinity between the "gray clouds" and the "sunny fields." The effect is the "shadowing spot" that the clouds make on the fields. In this image, Coleridge has not only made a sky-earth connection, but he suggests the presence of the sun in "sunny fields," and he contrasts the shade "gray" with the "sunny." Viewing the fields
From afar, the poet interprets his view as a sort of chaos.

He next traces the path of the river with his eye. He first sees it "with bushy rocks o'erwound." Then it appears "winding bright and full, with naked banks." These two images provide a meaningful contrast. The river at or near its source (which is in the proximity of where Coleridge is standing) is narrow and crowded over with bush-covered rocks. In its travels down the mountain, the river widens, and its "naked banks" are seen. It proceeds by "seats, and lawns, the Abbey and the wood, and courts, and hamlets, and Saint city-spire."

For the next image, the poet makes the transition from the "here" (L. 29) to "The Channel Shore" (L. 35). The channel, the islands, and the white sails occupy the foreground in this picture. "Dim" in "dim coasts" and "cloud-like" in "cloud-like hills" significantly place the coasts and hills at some distance; they may be said to occupy the midground. "The shoreless Ocean" completes the picture by filling out the background.

The magnificence and grandeur of this mountain-top expanse causes the poet to exclaim, "It seem'd like omnipresence!" and he culminates the topographical images in the following lines:

It seem'd like omnipresence! God, not thought,
Had built him there a Temple: the whole World
Seem'd grand in its vast circumferences;
No high profan'd my overindulged heart.
Last hour! It was a luxury—to be! (L. 38-42)

This section ends on a note of high intensity with the scenery giving the poet an aesthetic experience. The first part of the poem ended with the skylark's song—another instance of more intense poetry, and now
having expressed his delight in the cottage as well as in its beautiful
surroundings, Coleridge enumerates his reasons for leaving:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ah! quiet Dalli dear God, and Mount sublime!} \\
I was constrain'd to quit you. Was it right, \\
While my unnumber'd brother toil'd and bled. \\
That I should dream away the entrusted hours \\
On rose-leaf beds, pummeling the coward heart \\
With feelings all too delicate for use? \\
Sweet is the tear that from some Howard's eye \\
Drops on the cheek of one he lifts from earth! \\
And he that works no good with unwav'd face, \\
Does it but half; he chills me while he sides, \\
My benefactor, not my brother man! \\
Yet even thus, this cold beneficence \\
Praise, praise it, 0 my Soull oft as thou scann'st \\
The sluggish Tiny's vision-searing tribes! \\
The sigh for wretchedness, yet dem the tortured, \\
Nursing in some delicious solitude \\
Their slothful loves and dainty sympathies! \\
I therefore go, and join head, heart, and hand, \\
Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight. \\
Of Science, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ. (II. 43-62)
\end{align*}
\]

Fogle called lines 54-62 of this passage an instance of "false
grandeur": "... They are not empty, the thought contained in them
indeed is serious and crucial; but the style, with its artful Miltonic
inversions, its abstract pseudo-personifications, its elaborate arrange-
ment, is utterly inappropriate. The ideas would be best expressed in
the neutral style of sustained argument, where difficulty demands
clarity" (p. 104). Nevertheless, this passage shows a continued use of
poetic imagery. The imagery shifts from scenes in nature to views of
men doing beneficent deeds. The first picture, a very general one,
reveals men toiling and bleeding, while the poet, in contrast, dreams
"may the entrusted hours on rose-leaf beds." A Howard tearfully
lifting a fallen brother is the second picture. In the third picture
the stoic individual is soon helping the poet, and this man's effort, although it is far from being perfect, deserves the poet's praise. The last image of the "claggard Pity's vision-waving tribe," using Fogle's term, may be considered an "abstract pseudo-personification," and it portrays the idle dreamers such as the first image had done.

In view of what others have done and that he has failed to do, the poet resolves to leave his cottage "to fight the bloodless fight of Salome, Freedom, and the Truth in Christ." Coleridge's real reason for leaving his peaceful cottage, however, was to go to London to work on the Morning Post, since he needed money. Perhaps this substitution of noble purpose for that which in reality was mundane is partly responsible for the "false ring" in these lines.

In conclusion, the poet's thoughts return to his cottage:

Yet oft then after honourable toil
Roots the tired mind, and waking loves to dream,
By spirit shall revisit thee, dear Cot!
The Jemina and thy tender-pooing Rose,
And I shall sigh, and wish— assault Absal!
Ah!—and none greater! And that all had such!
It might be so—but the time is not yet.
Speed it, O Father! Let thy kingdom come! (11. 63-71)

This quiet and almost reverent return to the cottage gives the poem a sense of completion. As in the beginning, flowers are again associated with the cottage; jasmine appear unmodified; the rose is "tender-pooing" as it was earlier; and symbolic of love, the myrtles, which previously were seen blossoming in the "open air," are now "scentless of the mild sea-air." Throughout the concluding lines, Coleridge expresses a longing for his cottage, although his mind is quietly resigned.
to serve mankind. The active life versus the solitary life has been the poet's problem, expressed in part by the myrtle image; myrtles blossomed in the "open air" (ll. 4-5), and now they are "fearless" of the air coming from the distant sea. Once happy in his cottage, Coleridge now fearlessly chooses the active life.

For the purposes of this study certain substitutions in the title of the poem indicate the direction of the serial imagery; the poem could be called Coleridge's "Use of Serial Imagery on Having Left a 'Quiet Dell, Dear Cot, and Mount Sublime.'" Forming the linking chain between the serial images, the cottage is first pictured (ll. 1-26). Less attention is given the dell and mountain imagery which is juxtaposed in the next section (ll. 26-42). Thoughts of leaving his place of retirement to join his unselfish brethren prompts the poet (ll. 43-63), and his concluding thoughts (ll. 63-71) center again on the cottage, the framing image. Coleridge's reflections take the form of serial images, each of which bears a direct relationship to an aspect of his place of retirement.

Although the serial images within the various sections are less intricately developed than those in *This Lime-tree Bower by Prison*, the usage is the same. In fact, the real and imaginary pattern also fits this poem, the real being the place of retirement and the imaginary being the views of the poet's unano brethren. But the imagery of place pattern best defines the organization of this poem.
or Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement. Frost at Midnight shows the use of three types of imagery, namely serial, central, and mood, i.e., imagery, the chief purpose of which is to convey a predominant mood. Serial imagery predominates, and the other types of imagery bind the poem more closely together.

The first section contains a number of minor images, serially presented, and each adds to the mood of abnormal quietness. Potential central images are present in the frost (an image which frames the poem), the poet’s infant, and the stranger on the grate. The poem begins,

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The cottage cry
Caro loud—and hark! again loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abnormal musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Immoveable as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-turnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Nothinks, its notion in this bash of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose pure flaps and stirs the idling spirit
By its own moods interprets, every there
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought. (II. 1-23)
Inanimate frost is personified as it performs "its secret ministry."
"Unhelped by any wind," the frost works; a wind would destroy the
frost's solitude and would add sound to the quiet work. This frost
works quietly and alone. Alongside this image expressing quietness,
the poet adds a contrasting image—that of the owl's cry, which, by
contrast, emphasizes the quiet atmosphere.

The next two images express degrees of quietude. The "inmates"
of the poet's cottage are at rest and leave him to a solitude which
provides "obtrusive murmurings"—the metaphysical thought Coleridge again
mentions in Poems. A general view of Hartley, Coleridge's
son, sleeping peacefully in his cradle, completes the quiet scene.
The poet elaborates upon the total calm in "'Tis calm indeed; so calm,
that it disturbs/ And veers meditation with its strange/ And extreme
silence;"

The following four lines are repetitious: "Sea, hill, and wood,/This populous village: Sea, and hill, and wood,/ With all the never-
less going-on of life." The repetition is successful, particularly
in view of the terse, oblique approach to the relationship of the
separate general images, as is seen in the last line, "Inaudible as
dreams;"

The image of the "thin blue flame" lying on the "low-burnt fire"
prepares the reader for the contrasting film image which follows. The
fact that the flame is thin and blue adds to the atmosphere of quiet; a
red flame would not burn quietly, and it could but seldom be called
thin. The flame also "quivers not," and the fire is "low-burnt."

With
those still, intimate images, Coleridge begins to depict the hearth which is before him.

Floyd says that up to this point in the poem Coleridge has created "a state of abnormal quietude," and it is in this following image of the "one visible object in motion, the fluttering 'stranger' on the hearth, a piece of half-burnt paper" that the poet moves away from the quiet state (p. 210). A mood of abnormal quietude has been set, but whether the "sole unquiet thing," the stranger in a "piece of half-burnt paper" or not cannot be ascertained, since Coleridge never referred to it in terms other than "film" or "stranger." The film could be more accurately defined as a flake of soot which had collected and was seen hanging on the grate bar. In the Practical Emulator (1803-09), Coleridge explained the phrase, "Only that film," in this manner: "In all parts of the kingdom these films are called strangers and supposed to portend the arrival of some absent friend."

The film is seen fluttering, and Coleridge remarks,

Nothings, its motion in this mass of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with no live soul,
Making it a companionable form,
Those pamy flaps and sreaks the idling spirit
By its own modes interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And takes a toy of thought. (11. 17-23)

Coleridge relates the film to his own "idling Spirit." The film resolves. The poet's spirit is active. The spirit of the poet also interprets the "pamy flaps and sreaks" of the film and in them finds "echo" or "mirror" of itself. Thought is the poet's "toy":

by imaginative thought he infuses life into the film.
In the second section of the poem, the film is elaborated and becomes the connecting or central image. Images clustered about the poet's dreams (ll. 26-35) and those depicting the dreaming schoolboy (ll. 37-43) are essential. With thoughts of his childhood, Coleridge continues,

But 0! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Feesageful, have I gazed upon the bare,
To watch that fluttering stranger, and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Those bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt
Called me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams
And so I brooded all the following morn,
And by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swelling book.
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,
Tomsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
By play-side then we both were clothed alike! (ll. 26-43)

In a series of images Coleridge recalls the thoughts that the "fluttering stranger" called up during his schooldays. He chooses to use the word "stranger" in this section instead of "film" which he has used before; the words are synonymous, but "stranger" is used, since it anticipates a different meaning given the word in lines 42-43.

The stranger provoked daydreams in Coleridge, the schoolboy, even as the film is provoking this daydream or memory of his boyhood in Coleridge, the poet. Coleridge's dreams as a youth had also been of an earlier time—his "sweet birth-place" and the "old church-tower." The
church bells with a prophetic quality are like the stranger which caused
the schoolboy to look presageful.

"So good I, till the soothing things, I dreamt/ lulled me to
sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!" says the reminiscent poet. At
the time his household was at rest, and his baby, asleep in a cradle;
it is not unusual that Coleridge would think in terms of sleep and
dreams. He also uses these two lines to separate the day that he, the
schoolboy, saw the "stranger" on the grate and daydreamed about it,
from the next day, when after having slept and dreamed further, he
felt more firmly that the foreknowledge of his having seen a "stranger"
would be realised.

The next morning at school he brooded, yet he was "axed by the
stern preceptor's face," and he looked with "mock study" on his
"swimming book." In this scene he nervously anticipated seeing a
stranger, and under the guise of study, he continued to dream.

Then the door opened, he was ready to snatch a "hasty glance."
Expectantly and hopefully, he looked to see the "stranger's face"; here
Coleridge has made a subtle, yet serious pun on the word "stranger";
from the meaning of film, he has changed it to mean someone whom he has
not seen in a long while. He then pondered whom the stranger might
be—tousman, aunt, sister, or playmate.

The infant image becomes central to the third section, and serial
images are presented in a provocative manner. Through I (past) and
then (futuro), Coleridge uses a number of contrasting serial images.
In this section the poet's attention shifts to his sleeping infant,
since he says,

Dear Babe, that sweetest cradled by my side,
Those gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other love,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw naught lovely but the sky and stars,
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall teach
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask. (II. 46-64)

All has been quiet except the fluttering film, and now the post becomes
aware of his infant's breathings as they "fill up the interspersed
vacancies/ and momentary pauses of the thought!" A loving father,
Coleridge admires the beauty of his sleeping infant and is glad for
the advantages that his child will have. "Thou shalt learn far other
love, and in far other scenes," he says. He goes on to describe his
own childhood home in the "great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim." The
sky and stars were all that he saw lovely from his room at Christ's
Hospital, London. But the experiences of his son will be different.

To Coleridge's eye comes a vision of what his son will enjoy; he
sees him wandering "like a breeze" by lakes, sandy shores, "the crags
of ancient mountain," and beneath the clouds. With the clouds he draws
another image, since he says, "which image in their bulk both lakes and
shores/ And mountain crags"; the second "mirror" image recalls the earlier one of the "sounding Spirit which "by its own modes interprets, every where/ Echo or mirror seeming of itself?/ And makes a toy of Thought."

In the first "mirror" image Coleridge is saying that man is looking for a reflection of himself in everything, and here he also observes that God teaches "Himself in all, and all things in himself." The "lovely shapes" and "sounds intelligible" which the infant will later know are to make him aware of the presence of God. The images taken from nature are given new meanings; they are not ends of pleasure, but reminders of God. Of God, Coleridge finally says, "Great universal Teacher! he shall would/ Try spirit, and by giving make it ask." Contrasted with his father's barren youth, the child's future activities have been predicted.

The concluding serial imagery on the seasons comes as a further prophecy of what Coleridge's son will enjoy:

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothes the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Rolled to the tufts of snow on the bough branch
Of many apple-trees, while the half-thatch
Shakes in the sun-thunder, whether the cave-drops fall
Heard only in the trance of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet home. (II. 65-74)

Harper quoted these lines and said, "The chief beauty of the poem, however, is in its 'return,' which is the best example of the peculiar kind of blank-verse Coleridge had evolved, as natural-sounding as prose, but as exquisitely artful as the most complicated sonnet." (p. 291).

Fogle comments, "So 'Frost at Midnight,' the nearest to perfection of
the conversation group, begins with a state of abnormal quietude, moves away from it by means of the one visible object in motion, the fluttering 'stranger' on the hearth, a piece of half-burnt paper, develops the 'stranger's' associations, and by means of these curves slowly back to a different and fuller quiet, only completed, with really exquisite art, in the final line." He also observes that this effect was obtained by careful revision; "the first publication, in 1796, contained six more lines at the end, which destroy the effect" (p. 110).

These lines do present the best visual imagery in the poem, and the images are beautifully placed together. The first line, "Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee," is a kind of summary statement. The poet proceeds in fresh imagery to illustrate the four seasons. Summer is personified and in soon clothing the "general earth" with greenness.

As a dividing line for the four seasons, the poet uses the construction, "Mother . . . or; whether . . . or." The second reason that he describes is the spring. Spring's harbinger, the redbreast, sits and sings "Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch of mossy apple-tree."

This is early spring. The showery April described in "Dejection: An
Allegro has not yet arrived. In keeping with the delicate clothing that he is making of the seasons, Coleridge singularly puts the robin on a leafless branch of a mossy apple tree. In its proximity, he shows the sun melting the snow on a thatched roof. The redbreast and the sunshine on the roof are telling the defeat of winter and the arrival of spring.

Fall, with its rain and blast, is the third season. The image of
"sawe-drops" or rain gives way to the blustering "blast." The sawe-drops are only heard when the blast is silent. With continued movement the winter is depleted. Perhaps the frost will hang the sawe-drops up as icicles. In returning to the image of the frost and its "secret ministry" the poet adequately completes the cycle of the poem, and in this beautiful return he shows an animated frost hanging up "silent" icicles, "Quietly shining to the quiet Moon." The poem ends on this delicate and quiet note.

Serial images in the first twenty-three lines express a need of abnormal calm. The visual picture is not so complete as those that Coleridge had drawn in This Lime-tree House. In fact, there is a shift of scene throughout the first section. The silent frost works out-of-doors. Inside the sleeping household and the poet's infant attract his attention. Sea, hill, wood, and the village—everything outside of the poet's cottage—are as "inaudible as dreams." The fire on the hearth is still, and the film, paralleled by the poet's spirit, is the "sole unquiet thing."

The film inspired thought of Coleridge's boyhood days, when at school he watched the fluttering stranger, and lines 24-43 center on his former experiences. The most complete serial picture is of the boy Coleridge looking for the fulfillment of the "stranger" (11, 26-43). The boy's watching the film (11, 23-26) and his dreaming (11, 26-35) are the other serial views threaded together by a relationship to the film.

Serial imagery in the third section (11, 44-64) is bound together by a relationship to the poet's infant. The poet's childhood "in the
great city, pent "mid cloisters dim" is contrasted by Coleridge's hopes for Hartley's youth; he foresees Hartley enjoying nature and learning eternal truths from nature. He will also enjoy the seasons as depicted in serial images (ll. 65-74). The last image of the frost performing its "secret ministry" offsets a return to the frost image at the beginning of the poem. The title leads into this image, and now the return to it gives additional unity. The first section has expressed quietude, and these last lines fix a quietness which is more exacting than that of the sleeping household, the hearth, the frost, or the sea, hill, wood, and village. This quiet is founded on the graceful lines used to depict the seasons and especially the "silent" icicles, "Quietly shining to the quiet Moon."
Notes to Chapter Three


Chapter Four — Polar Images

I.

Two kinds of imagery can be found in Fear in Solitude, and each may be called polar imagery. By polar imagery is meant images which are diametrically opposite in nature. Analogous is the use of "polar" in physical chemistry, since the term designates "a union of atoms in which the chemical bond is electrostatic attraction between oppositely charged particles." Figuratively speaking, the imagery at one end of the "pole" in Fear in Solitude is quiet or pleasant, and it is used to frame the poem; it is in the "Solitude" mentioned in the title. Opposite to it is the turbulent imagery which fills the body of the poem and is equivalent to the "Fears." An examination of the two types of polar imagery, the pleasant and the turbulent, however, is necessary to clarify their use and to show how each serves to unify the poem.

II.

The opening of the poem describes Coleridge seated in his favorite nook. The alarm of an invasion has distracted his thoughts, and he seeks solace in the nook. The scene about him is beautiful, and he expresses his profound admiration for it in the following manner:
A groan and silent spot, amid the hills.
A small and silent dell, o'er stiller place
No singing sky-dark ever paused himself.
The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,
Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,
All golden with the never-bloodless flame,
Which now blooms most profusely; but the dell,
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As corn-field, or the unripe flax,
Then, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
The level sunshine glimmering with green light.
Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook. (II. 1-12)

The nook is characterized by greatness and quietness. It is a small
dell, the most quiet one that a skylark ever visited. Hills surround
the dell, and imagery used later in the poem establishes the fact that
the hills were meant to demure the poet from society. The nook
itself becomes paradoxical as the poem proceeds, although the nook is
sequestered and away from society, from it the poet's mind sees society
topographically.

The hills surrounding the dell are covered with low-growing purple
heather and contrast with the "swelling slope," which is covered with
tall golden furze. The dell, unlike either the hills or the slope, is
"fresh and delicate," and the phrase "bathed by the mist" suggests this
quality. The green spring cornfield and the image of the evening
sunlight glimmering with green light through the half-transparent flax
stems add further richness. The hills and the slope possess a kind of
beauty which is, nevertheless, surpassed by the dell, exquisite and
quiet. The poet exclaims, "Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!"

The poet's thoughts shift from solo delight in the dell to imagining
the type of person who would most enjoy the dell. A description of the
"humble man" follows,

Oh! 'Tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
Which all, not thinking, would love; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise.
Here he might lie on form or withered heath,
While from the singing lark (that sings unseen
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),
And from the sun, and from the broody air,
Sweet influences troubled o'er his frame;
And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of nature.
And so, his senses gradually wove
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark,
That singest like an angel in the clouds! (ll. 12-28)

The humble man, an individual type, is described as one who learned
wisdom through a degree of youthful folly. The visual images used in
connection with the humble man are similar to those found in other
conversation poems. He might lie, for instance, on the form or with¬
ered heath; this is similar to Thecolloim Harp, when Coleridge said,
"On the midway slope/ Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon."
This reclining man may also hear the unseen lark. The lark appears
three times in this poem and is similar to the lark image in Reflections
on having Left a Place of Retirement, where it is "Viewless or haply
for a moment seen/ Glowing on sunny wings."

"From the sun, and from the broody air,/ Sweet influences troubled
o'er his frame." This further suggests the passage in Thecolloim Harp,
in which Coleridge pictured himself resting on the midway slope at noon;
a passive instrument, he compared himself with the colloim harp. The
humble man is also passive. The "sweet influences," appropriate to this 
fresh and green setting, "trembled o'er his frame," and the singing lark, 
the sun, and breezy air blend into a picture of delicacy.

The influences causing meditative joy are unlike those which roused 
desultory thoughts in The Bolian Hawn, then

Full many a thought uncall'd and undetain'd,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject halt! (II. 39-43)

The humble man, in one sense, is passively influenced by nature, but he 
also actively "made up a meditative joy and found Religious meanings in 
the forms of Nature!"

In Frost at Midnight the poet desired that his son see God in 
nature, and here the humble man in the sequestered nook meditates and 
finds "Religious meanings in the forms of Nature!" Like the schoolboy 
in Frost at Midnight, he dreams, but he dreams not of the past. His 
dreams are of "better worlds," and the lark "like an angel in the clouds" 
sings as a kind of background to his meditations.

The humble man is pictured in serene and delicate imagery which 
sustains the preceding nook imagery. The poet is able to reconcile the 
unity of life that the humble man can experience with nature, but 
seeing the man in relation to his fellowsmen is a difficulty elaborated 
in the next section of the poem:

My God! it is a melancholy thing
For such a man, who would full fain preserve 
His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel
For all his human brethren—O my God!
It weighs upon the heart, that he must think
that uproar and that stride may now be stirring
This way or that way o'er those silent hills—
Invasion, and the thunder and the shout,
And all the crash of onset; fear and rage,
And undetermined conflict—even now,
Even now, proceeding, and in his native isle:
Carnage and groans beneath this blessed sun!
We have offended, O my countrymen!
We have offended very grievously,
And been most tyrannous. From east to west
A green of accusation pierces heaven!
The wretched plea d against us; multitudes
Countless and vehement, the sons of God,
Our brethren! Like a cloud that travels on,
Steemed up from Cairo's snare of pestilence,
Even so, my countrymen! have we gone far!*
And borne to distant tribes slavery and pang,
And deadlier far, our vices, these deep taint
With slow perdition murder the whole man,
His body and his soul. (II. 29-53)

The peace and quiet, that the humble man enjoys in the doll are
interrupted by the noisy turbulence caused by this man's fellow
countrymen. The "uproar" and "stride" which were "stirring" this way
or that way o'er those silent hills" disrupt the quietude, and other
indications of tumult follow—Invasion, thunder, shout, and the crash
of onset. The "religious meanings" the humble man found are contrasted
by the fear, rage, and undetermined conflict in these lines. The sun,
once a sweet influence, is now seen shining upon "carnage" and "groans."

"We have offended, O my countrymen! We have offended very
grievously," and been most tyrannous, "assures the poet, and with this
he sets the underlying imagery for this section. Up to this point the
imagery has been clustered about the doll and the humble man. Now the
poet's thoughts concern society, specifically British society, from
which he sought refuge in the novel. He couples sound and visual imagery
in an effort to present his disconcerting fears of invasion. The visual
images take on an additional aura of unpleasantness. Slavery, pangs,
and the vices of the British, for example, are "like a cloud that
travels on, / Steamed up from Cairo's mazes of pestilence."

Having enumerated Britain's sins from "east to west," the poet
elaborates on the evils found "at home":

Meanwhile, at home,

All individual dignity and power
Engulfed in Courts, Commissions, Institutions,
Associations and Societies,
A vain, speech-murdering, speech-reporting Guild,
One Benefit-Club for mutual Flattery,
Its haunts drunk up, desert as at a grace,
Pollutions from the订ening cup of wealth;
Contemptuous of all honourable rule,
Yet basting freedom and the poor man's life
For gold, as at a market. The sweet words
Of Christian promise, words that ever yet
Bled their sad destruction, were they wisely preached,
Are muttered o'er by men, whose tones proclaim
How flat and uncaring they feel their trade;
Rank scoffers sore, but not too indolent
To deem them falsehoods or to know their truth.
Oh, blasphemeus! the Book of Life in nudo
A superstitious instrument, on which
Its goblins o'er the cakes to mean to break;
For all must swear—all and in every place,
College and church, council and justice-court;
All, all must swear, the briber and the bribed,
Merchant and lawyer, senator and priest,
The rich, the poor, the old man and the young;
All, all make up one scheme of perjury,
That faith doth seal; the very name of God
Sounds like a juggler's charm and, bold with joy,
Forth from his dark and lonely hiding-place,
(Forlorned night!) the cullot Athanor,
Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon,
Springs his blue-fringed lid, and holds them close,
And hooting at the glorious sun in Heaven,
Crises out, 'Where is it?' (11, 53-86)
institutions. The visual image of drinking "daveno as at a grace,\/
Pollutions from the burning cup of wealth" is a vivid approach to
materialism, since it reveals the religious guise of hypocrisy in
"daveno as at a grace," and the idea of drinking "pollutions" evokes
sores. "Yet bartering freedom and the poor man's life/ For gold, as
at a market" sustains the idea: "Freedom" and the "poor man's life"
and detail to the "pollutions."

Mention of the "sweet words of Christian promises" is pointed out
in the next image, which is both auditory and visual. The words are
"muttered o'er by men, whose tones proclaim/ How flat and wearisome
they feel their trade"; these lines, inherently visual, depict a
character type, namely the priest or preacher who fails to realize
his proper station in life. Looking in detail, the image, nevertheless,
reveals the indifference and hypocrisy of these men. The picture
contrasts with the imagery used earlier in the poem which outlined the
goodness of the humble man and his affinity with nature.

Sound continues to be mingled with sight in the next lines. The
"Book of Life is made/ A superstitious instrument, on which/ We gabble
o'er the oaths we soon to break," says the poet, and he names the
places where people are made to swear—the college, the market,
the council, and the justice-court. He states that all are forced to
swear, "the bribor and the bribed," and in naming the separate types,
namely the merchant, lawyer, senator, priest, rich, poor, old, and
young, he creates a series of general visual images which elaborate on
his conclusion that "All, all make up one scheme of perjury./ That
faith doth real."

"Juggler's charm" in the clause, "The very name of God/ Sounds like a juggler's charm," sustains the hypocritical sense found in previous images, and the description of the owl is atheism continues in the same unpleasant vein. The owl is young, yet it has lived in a disagreeable hiding place, dark and lonely. Its physiognomy consists of foul wings and cold blue-fringed lids. The owl travailsa "shame the noon," and with eyes tightly shut hoots at the "glorious sun" and cries out, "Where is it?" The owl is an allegorical representation of atheism, and Coleridge describes its activity by using dark, distasteful imagery. Through a description of its blind hooting, he sustains the hypocritical aspect begun earlier and also introduces the aspect of ignorance and folly.

The visual imagery from lines 23-36 contrasts with the previous imagery, since it is unquiet and unpleasant. The poet has moved from the humble man to British society, and in depicting his fears, he reveals the offenses that have been committed. The "Religious meanings in the forms of nature" that the humble man enjoyed are changed into an elaboration of man's sins—both political and religious. The "silent hills" and the "blessed sun" are provoked by shame and groans. Politics has deteriorated into hypocritical materialism, and Christianity, promising hope for reform, is mocked. The distasteful imagery reveals this state.

Further fears are expressed in the next section of the poem.
Blindly we have decreed war for our own entertainment, and it has caused the death of thousands, states Coleridge in this passage. He begins by pointing out the country's ingratitude for the peace which it has enjoyed—"Peace long preserved by fleets and perilous seas." Protecting "fleets" and "perilous seas" are the first ominous images. The sound image of swelling the war-whoop continues in this vein, and the British ignorance of war's "ghastlier workings," being famine, blue plague, battle, siege, and flight through wintry snows, sustains the unpleasant imagery. War and bloodshed, also distasteful, are metaphorically called "animating sports," at which the British people are spectators. The evils of warfare are very real to the poet, but the people, lacking the experience of war, are blind to them. Unlike the quiet Atheism which purposely closed its eyes to reality, the British people still dwell in
their primary "hiding place" and lack the imagination that perceives reality.

The British people drew up mandates described as having a "bog preamble, holy names, and adjurations of the God in Heaven." Misguided thinking, as well as a further misuse of God's name, are intended in this description, and the ease with which war is decreed also impresses the reader. That war news is received in an unnatural manner is expressed in the next image: boys, girls, and women, respectful of life to the extent that they "would groan to see a child pull off an insect's leg," recall of war, "The best amusement for our morning walk!" Since its unpleasantness is unrealized, war has a universal appeal.

Further light is thrown on the desire for war in the following passages:

The poor wretch, who has learnt his only prayers
From curses, who knows scarcely words enough
To ask a blessing from his Heavenly Father,
Becomes a fluent preacher, absolute
And technical in victories and defeats,
And all our dainty terms for fratricide;
Terms which us trundle smoothly over our tongues
Like mere abstractions, empty sounds to which
We join no feeling and attach no form;
As if the soldier died without a wound;
As if the fibres of this godlike frame
Were gored without a pang; as if the wretch,
Who fell in battle, doing bloody deeds,
Passed off to Heaven, translated and not killed;
As though he had no wife to pine for him,
No God to judge him! Therefore, evil days
Are coming on us, 0 my countrymen!
And what if all-avenging Providence,
Strong and retaliative, should make us know
The meaning of our words, force us to feel
The desolation and the agony
Of our fierce doings? (II, 103-129)

The imagery becomes more specific, since the poet has moved from a
discourse of war in general to identification of an individual type, the
"saint preacher," this type is defined largely through social imagery
which deportis this man's ignorance of religious terms and his guildness
with military terms. The "poor wretch," as he is called, evokes a
picture of a type—unmannered, unlearned, ugly, and unfeeling. His
three qualities are echoed in the speech of the people. "Pointy terms
for fastidious" are used abstractly, since they are "empty sounds to
which/ to join no feeling and attach no form!" Because we speak in
this manner, we believe "as if the soldier died without a wound," says
Coleridge, and with rather general visual images he elaborates on their
treatment of the death of a soldier. The idea of giving the "blues of
this godlike from" is intrinsically interesting: the active and connot
word "gored" is contrasted with the delicate "blues" and "godlike
from." "Without a pary" unless the image even more explicitly.
Ranier
scene intended throughout the description of the soldier. The soldier,
for example, is a "wretch," one who does "bloody deeds," yet having
died in battle, he goes to heaven "translated and not killed!"
Considered from a Romantic viewpoint, the soldier as a man is innocent,
yet he is forced to commit bloody deeds; he is like Yeats's Irish air-
nam, the said, "These that I fight I do not hate, I These that I guard I
do not love." Because of his bohane deeds as a soldier, he is seen in an
unpleasant light, and the unthinking way in which his death is viewed is
revealed by the euphemistic "translated" which is opposed by the realistic
"killed." The soldier's family and religious ties are oversteated, and
Coleridge visualizes these ideas in a pining wife and a judging God. Both images complete the imagery concerning his death and reveal the harmful consequence. In conclusion the poet envisions "evil days" and asks—what if Providence wreak the people and make them know the meaning of their words and force them to feel the desolation and the agony of their fierce doings?

The poet's fears of war are expressed in lines 87-129. In this section he continues to use turbulent and disagreeable images. Simple one-word images are found in "famine" and "battle," whereas a more detailed picture is seen in the description of a soldier's death. Metaphorically, the poet sees war and bloodshed as the "animating sports" for British spectators. The "fluent phraseman" is described as an individual type. Throughout this varied use of imagery, Coleridge sustains the unpleasant tone that he established when he began discussing his fears.

Having considered the threat of war and having reached the conclusion that evil days may be coming, the poet seeks mercy and issues a challenge to his countrymen:

Spare us yet awhile,
Father and God! O spare us yet awhile! 
Oh! let not English women drag their flight
Painting beneath the burden of their babes,
Of the most infants, that but yesterday
Laughed at the breast! Sons, brothers, husbands, all
Who ever gazed with fondness on the form
Which grew up with you round the same fireside,
And all who ever heard the sabbath-bells
Without the infidel's scorn, make yourselves pure!
Stand forth! be not roped an impious foe,
Impious and false, a light yet cruel race,
Who laugh away all virtue, mingling with
With deeds of murder, and still promising
Freedom, themselves too sensual to be free,
Painful life's attrition, and cheat the heart
Of faith and quiet hope, and all that soothes,
And all that lifts the spirit! Stand up forth;
Render them back upon the insulted ocean,
And let them toss an idly on its waves
As the vile sea-wind, which some mountain-blast
Swept from our shores! And oh! may we return
Not with a drunken triumph, but with fear,
Repealing of the wrongs with which we stung
So fierce a foe to victory! (ll. 129-153)

The poet asks God to spare the British and pictures flight during an
invasion. In the clause, "English women drag their flight/Fainting
beneath the burden of their labors" another unpleasant scene is created,
and "drag," "flight," "fainting," and "burden" especially sound a
somber note. The contrasting term "Sweet infant's" that "but yesterday
laughed at the breast" accentuates the image.

The challenge is issued to sons, brothers, and husbands. The
poet essentially challenges all those men who have loved—those who
have "gazed with fondness on the forms/Which grew up with you round
the same fireside," and he challenges those whose faith is unblemished,
"who ever heard the sabbath-bells without the infidel's scorn." These
images are quiet and free from the discord that predominates in this
section.

The challenge is to repel the foe, and the foe is described as a
typo. It epitomises all of Britain's evils and is also guilty of other
sins. The foe, the country of France, is impious, false, lighthearted,
without virtue, and cruel; promising freedom, it is too sensual to be
The enemy poisons life's friendships and cheats the heart of faith, hope, and comfort.

Render the enemy back upon the "insulted ocean," Coleridge explains. Let the enemy "toss as silly on its waves/ As the vile sea-weed, which some mountain blast/ Swept from our shores." Repulsive nature imagery clearly expresses the poet's contempt. Coleridge desires that the British return not with a "drunken triumph," but with scars "Repeating of the wrongs with which we sting/ So fierce a foe to frenzy!"

Lines 123-154 show a continued use of unpleasant visual imagery. A pleasant strain enters when the poet views the infant-mother relationship and when he pictures the family life of British men. The foe is defined prosaically, but with repulsive nature imagery the poet shows his contempt of the enemy. Coleridge's challenge to his countrymen is effectively resounded through visual imagery, when family love is quietly pictured against the background of an enemy's threats.

Having expressed his fears and having hoped for reform, Coleridge defends his positions:

I have told,
O Britons! O my brethren! I have told
Most bitter truth, but without bitterness.
Nor deem my zeal or faith less or diminished;
For never can true courage dwell with them,
They, playing tricks with conscience, dare not look
At their own vices. We have been too long
Dupes of a deep delusion. Save, behold,
Grooming with restless anxiety, expect
All change from change of constituted power;
As if a Government had been a robe,
On which our vice and wretchedness were tagged
Like fancy-points and fringes, with the robe
Pulled off at pleasure. Fondly those attach
A radical censure to a few
Poor drudges of chastising Providence,
Who borrow all their hues and qualities
From our own folly and rank wickedness,
Which gave them birth and nursed them. Others, meanwhile,
Dote with a mad idolatry; and all
Who will not fall before their images.
And yield them worship, they are enemies
Even of their country! (II. 153-175)

The poet has told the bitter truth, but without bitterness. His chief criticism, that "true courage" cannot remain with those who "playing tricks with conscience, dare not look at their own vices," forms a kind of visual impression. Abstract qualities are personified. Courage is modified by "true" which contrasts it with the falseness that has pervaded the criticism and that is also expressed in "playing tricks with conscience." The fact that they "Dare not look at their own vices" intensifies the note of deception, and with the statement, "We have been too long dupes of a deep delusion," Coleridge completes the general criticism.

Specifically, the poet describes some people as "groaning with restless enmity"; a hyperbolic sound image, this also creates an unpleasant visual impression. The simile, illustrating the changes expected from change of governmental power, equates government to a robe, and vice and wretchedness are the "fancy-points" and "fringes" on the robe. Radical education is blamed on "a few poor drudges of chastising Providence." "Drudges" provokes an obscure visual impression. The "drudges" are those "Who borrow all their hues and qualities/ From our own folly and rank wickedness,/ Which gave them birth and nursed them"; in these lines the visual "hues" and "qualities" are linked to
the abstract "folly" and "rank wickedness," which, in turn, proceed from the phrase, "gave them birth and nursed them." By placing visual and abstract qualities together, the poet creates a picture that makes more clear the vices of the British. A mere enumeration of the evils would not be nearly so effective as this juxtaposition of abstract and actual qualities by which the drudge is depicted.

In a brief image, Coleridge sees others doting "with a mad idolatry." All who will not "fall" and "yield" worship to them are considered enemies of their country. Although this picture is concisely drawn, its visual content suffices to portray unyielding prejudice that demands servile acceptance of its tenets.

The imagery in this section (II. 153-175) continues in the unquiet vein. Personification of abstract qualities often creates a visual image, and falseness and deceit continue to be emphasized.

Having laid bare his fears, the poet returns to serene contemplation of Britain's place in his life:

Such have I been doomed,—

**But, O dear Britain! O my Mother Isle!**
Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy
To me, a son, a brother, and a friend,
A husband, and a father, who reveres
All bonds of natural love, and find them all
Within the limits of thy rocky shores,
O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!
How shouldst thou prove any else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely and all honorable things,
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being?
Thou livest nor form nor feeling in my soul
Unborrowed from my country! O divine
And bounteous island! thou hast been my sole
And most magnificent temple, in the which
I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
Loving the God that made me" (II. 175-197)

The poet's thoughts concerning Britain have been fearful, but that
Britain is "dear" and "holy" to him is repeated throughout this passage.
The poet views himself as a son, a brother, a friend, a husband, and a
father and finds that all "bonds of natural love" are "within the limits
of thy rocky shores." His enjoyment of nature has also been centered in
Britain with its lakes, mountain-hills, clouds, quiet dales, rocks, and
seas. In this list, "dales" only is modified, and Coleridge chose to
say "quiet dales"; sequestered in the quiet dell, he probably intended
to emphasize the serenity of dales in general.

From nature, says Coleridge, he has "drunk in" all his intellectual
life; "There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul/ Unborrowed from my
country!" he exclaims. He calls Britain a "divine" and a "bounteous
island" and metaphorically views it as his "soul" and "most magnificent
temple." The images of his walking with awe and singing his "stately
songs" in the temple emphasize his attitude of reverence toward his
country, and the idea of his loving the Creator-God adds to the total
effect. The thread of religious emphasis that has pervaded the poem
reaches a peak in the temple image. This visual imagery, quiet and
exquisite, differs from that which precedes it. The poet is moved by
his gentle thoughts of Britain and through the visual imagery reveals
his love and admiration for the country.
The poet's fears return momentarily:

May my fears,

By filial fears, be vain! and may the vaults
And room of the vengeful enemy
Pass like the gust, that roared and died away
In the distant trees which heard, and only heard
In this low dell, bowed not the delicate grass. (ll. 197-202)

Framedly, Coleridge wishes that his fears may be vain. He uses nature imagery to restate his wish: the gust "roared" and "died away" in the "distant tree," so Coleridge hopes that the alarm of an invasion will pass in a similar manner, and he makes the image more emphatic by saying that the gust was "only heard in this low dell," and it "bowed not the delicate grass." With this he continues to hollow the dell.

Coleridge's concluding thoughts return to the dell which he pictured in the beginning:

...But now the gentle dew-fall sends abroad
The fruit-like perfume of the golden furse;
The light has left the summit of the hill,
Though still a sunny gleam holds beautiful;
Aslant the ivied beacon. How farewell,
Farewell, whilst, O soft and silent spot!
On the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill,
Honoured I wind my way; and lo! recalled
From lodings that have well-nigh wearied me,
I find myself upon the brow, and pause
Startled! And after lonely sojourning
In such a quiet and surrounded spot,
This burst of prospect, here the shadowy main,
Din-tinted, there the mighty majesty
Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
And clay fields, seems like society—
Converging with the mind, and giving it
A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!
And now, beloved Stowey! I behold
Thy church-tower, and, nothinks, the four huge oaks
Clustered, which mark the mansion of my friend;
And close behind them, hidden from my view,
In my own lovely cottage, where my babe
And my babe's mother dwell in peace! With light
And quickened footsteps thitherward I tend,
Remembering thee, O green and silent dell!
And grateful, that by nature's quietness
And solitary musings, all my heart
Is softened, and made worthy to indulge
Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind. (ll. 203-232)

The tenor of delicacy is maintained in these lines in the "gentle dew-fall" and the "soft and silent spot," as well as in the entire scene created by the visual images in lines 203-207. The picture is in shades of gold from the "golden furse" on the slope to the "sunny beam . . . aslant the ivied beacon." Light contrasts with dark, and the scene continues to be one of quietness.

The poet leaves the "spirit-healing nook" and traces his way "on the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill." In the heath and green sheeptrack is a continuation of the green motif begun in the introduction. Coleridge has been revived from his wearisome thoughts, and upon the brow of the hill he views another picture, and it startles him. The dim-tinted shadowy main is before him, and the "huge amphitheatre of rich and dry fields" in the distance are like society to him—"Conversing with the mind, and giving it/ A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!" Catharsis of his fears enables the poet to see animated society in a pleasant light. Consequently, he, in a visual image, even compares society to nature, his chief delight. Having reached the summit of the hills which have separated him from actual society, Coleridge depicts a vast, yet shadowy and delicate, topographical view.

Coleridge's thoughts turn next to Stowey. He first sees the church
towers, an image that recalls the sabbath bolls in line 137. The sabbath bolls carried the connotation of pure religion, and it is conceivable that the church tower stands as a symbol of this ideal. Elms have reminded the poet of society, and he now sees "four huge elms/ Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend." The friend is Thomas Paolo. Coleridge also sees his own "lowly cottage" and thinks of his "hobo" and his "hobo's mother," who dwell in peace; this image is reminiscent of the once happy women and their infants (ll. 130-134), who were seen fleeing during an invasion. The peaceful aspect of the poet's home is marked here. Coleridge with "light" and "quickened footsteps" continues his homeward way. With gratitude he recalls the doll "that by nature's quietness/ And solitary musings" have caused him to love and desire society.

With serene and delicate images Coleridge concludes the poem. He has completely put aside the unquiet thoughts that absorbed his attention throughout the body of the poem. He views the twilight activity on the surrounding scene much in the same way that he described the scene in the opening lines. The poet's homeward trek reveals delight in nature expressed through visual imagery, and when a scene in nature reminds Coleridge of society, the reader is reminded of how in the first part of the poem his thoughts moved from the nook to visualize the humble man within the nook. Coleridge now realizes that his heart has been softened and "made worthy to indulge/ Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind." His thoughts earlier had sympathized only with the humble man.
Unlike Coleridge's other conversation poems which maintain one chief type of visual imagery throughout, *Fears in Solitude* contains two main threads of contrasting visual imagery. Serene and delicate imagery begins the poem and is clustered about the doll and the humble man. The humble man, however, reminds Coleridge of hisaiming fellow-men, and the body of the poem (ll. 29-175) elaborates the poet's fears concerning British society and its sins, political and religious. The imagery used is turbulent and unpleasant and varies according to its subject. After the poet voices his fears, the visual imagery is again serene and delicate (ll. 175-232). England, the poet's mother country, occupies his thoughts, and he again turns to the doll; afterwards he traces his way homeward through a series of visual images. Polar imagery—delicate and dogmatic, quiet and turbulent, serene and fearful—is used together in this poem which paradoxically relates Coleridge's fears in solitude.
Notes to Chapter Four

1. The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London, 1957), pp. 170-179. All quotations from Coleridge's poetry which appear in this chapter are taken from this edition and henceforth will be identified by line in the text.

2. By "prosaically" I mean that Coleridge has used a style which is closer to prose than poetry. Coleridge realized this and wrote concerning "Fears in Solitude": "The above is perhaps not Poetry,—but rather a sort of middle thing between Poetry and Oratory—sermon proper!—some parts are, I am conscious, too tame even for animated prose" (Poems of STC, p. 257). To say that the entire poem is "prosaic," however, would be misleading, since genuine poetic passion is operative in certain passages. Passages such as this one do resemble prose more than poetry.
Chapter Five — Multifarious Imagery

The three types of images discussed in the preceding chapters are found juxtaposed in *Dejection: An Ode*, and because of Coleridge's varied use of imagistic types, this imagery is called multifarious. Considered apart from the poem, certain images may appear elusive; they may be abstract or semi-visual. But when the poem is taken as a whole, the images, whether serial, polar, or abstract, are blended together with artistic control. They function to reveal the poet's dejection, which is later transformed by a quickened imagination. *Dejection* opens with a mood of abnormal quietness, which is expressed by inert nature images; a storm comes, and a composed quiet follows. If one form of imagery is not carried throughout the poem, we do not have a breakdown in Coleridge's artistry. Rather, like a skillful composer, who uses different instruments of an orchestra to get desired effects, Coleridge employs the type of imagery which will best sustain his mood. Within the various sections of the *Ode* the central image acts to give a central effect. Detail is supplied by the serial images, and contrast by the polar images. The abstract or metaphysical imagery forms a parallel to the poet's inner life. Although the imagery is multi-colored, its
result is a symphony.

II.

Coleridge begins Dedication by prefacing a stanza from the "Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence" to it:

Late, late yestream I saw the new Moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my Master cast
We shall have a deadly storm.

Allusion to the ballad follows in the first stanza of the poem:

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, the wold
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unravled by winds, that ply a busier trade
Then those which would you cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that more and more
Upon the strings of this Aeolian Harp,
Which better for useo unto.\(^1\) (II. 1-3)

If Sir Patrick Spence was correct "weather-wise," says Coleridge, then they will have a storm that evening. With a stroke in the direction of a polar image he contrasts the "tranquil night" with the night of the storm—caused by winds "that ply a busier trade." But the winds presently "would you cloud in lazy flakes." This image has a textual quality, and "lazy" as well as "flakes," in modifying the cloud, contribute to the tranquility of the scene.

The placid scene is depicted by images which give it a lethargic, almost distasteful, value. Unlike the Solian harp in the setting of the poem by that name, this lute is monotonous and irritating to hear. Unlike the "delicious sugar" which "sink and rise," the "dull sobbing draft" instead "moans and rakes" on this Solian harp. "Draft" is one of the
most unpoetic words that could be applied to the wind, and use of
cosmotopoetic words such as "sobbing," "moans," and "rakes" adds to the
serpent image. Words connected to the "draft" are unusually grave, and
the reader is not surprised at hearing the poet say that it would be
better if the lute were silent.

The reasons for the poet's speculations about the weather are
enumerated in the next passage:

For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and equally bleak. (ll. 9-14)

The moon appears odd; it is "winter-bright," yet it is "overspread
with phantom light." In the expression, "with swimming phantom light
o'erspread," the idea of the previous line is inversely repeated, but
the addition of the word "swimming" adds the idea of glimmering, and
"But rimed and circled by a silver thread" describes the old moon.
The word "rimed" already suggests the margin of a thing "usually of
something circular or curving." "Circled" further suggests roundness
and adds the detail "by a silver thread." Just as "rimed" anticipates
"circled," so "circled," in turn, prepares the reader for the image of
the old moon resting in the lap of the new moon. The moon image,
accentuated by the piling up of description, symbolically epitothes the
poet's hope for a storm. It is central to this section just as the
wind image in a less obvious way was central to lines 1-3.

Having used the excerpt from the "Ballad of Sir Patrick: Spence" as
a kind of springboard to lead into the poem, Coleridge described the atmospheric conditions that he encountered on this particular night. He expressed his distaste for the too, too placid mood that the wind playing upon the lake creates, and in the expectation of a storm he expresses his wish:

And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they swept,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

(11. 15-20)

Here the poet longs to see progression, and rather than the lackadaisical breeze, he would see a "swelling gust." Instead of a cloud in "Lazy flakes," he prefers to see the "slant night-shower driving loud and fast!" These images are polar to the preceding ones.

The poet then informs the reader of his own lothargic condition. Using positive suggestions of what the wind has often done for him in the past, he reveals his present state. The wind or the sounds that it made have "raised" him; in this there is the suggestion that he, like the old noon, is inert. Then the lifelessness of his soul is expressed in the phrase "sent my soul abroad." In line 20 he reveals that he is experiencing a "dull pain" which the wind might "startle." And in the exclamation "make it move and live!" he further expresses his desire to overcome this unimpassioned condition. Coleridge's use of "oft" in "Those sounds which oft have raised me" seems to indicate that this lothargic moodiness is not a new experience. Some critics consider Coleridge's use of "oft" in "Those sounds which oft have raised me" to show that this lothargic moodiness is not a new experience. Some critics consider Coleridge's use of "oft" in "Those sounds which oft have raised me" to show that this lothargic moodiness is not a new experience.
power, and they overlook this passage. During other times of dejection the winds have revived Coleridge, and he hopes that they will in this instance.

In the first stanza two central images are apparent, namely the wind and the moon. The wind is seen as a creative force both as it moulds the clouds and as it "moans" and "roars" upon the Bellian lute. In its greater activity the wind in the past has caused the poet to reverberate with life. The moon image is closely related to that of the wind; it symbolises the poet's hope for the ensuing storm. Polar images define the night, present and future, and the poet's experiences, past and present. As opposed to the tranquil night, for instance, there is the suggestion of rain and "equally blast," of the "slant night-shower driving loud and fast," etc. As a whole the images depict the abnormally quiet evening and the poet's restlessness.

In stanza two the poet's apathetic condition is not against nature's static beauty:

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural cutlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady! in this sea and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throatless wood,
All this long eve, no balmy and serene,
May I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—end with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give way their motion to the stars;
These stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, not bodimed, but always seen;
You crescent moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are! (ll. 21-33)
Torpid words, "void," "dark," "dream," "stifled," and "drowsy," describe the poet's grief. Sara's presence is made known in this stanza, and Coleridge reveals his inmost thoughts to her. He describes his inert predicament as "van" and "heartless." Even the "thrush," the song bird of the thrush family, cannot "see" him from this mood. He has been gazing at the "peculiar tint of yellow green" in the western sky, yet he is unmoved by the beauty of the scene.

Using an image of the eye, he says, "And still I gazed—and with how blank an eye!" His attention is then focused on the scattered clouds in the formations of "flakes" and "bars." "Thin" describes the clouds and adds to the erodibility of clouds "That give away their motion to the stars." Subtly, the wind works; it acts on the clouds and quietly gives the illusion that the stars are moving. Coleridge animates the stars further in "these stars, that glide behind them or between,/ Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen."

Value is given to parts of the scene in stanza two, and for the first time in Poésy. Coleridge has used serial imagery, the serial picture being an astronomical one. The moon is the focal point, but it does not appear centrally and symbolically as it did in stanza one. The visible effects of the wind are presented. The yellow-green western sky is first seen. Then come the clouds and stars. The return is to the moon, the center of interest in this picture, and it appears stagnant, "fixed as if it grew/ In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue." The other images have been placid. The entire scene is beautiful, but still. The apathetic poet concludes, "I see them all so excellently fair/ I
oo, not feel, how beautiful they are!

The third stanza is short, but it marks a kind of turning point in the problem of the poet's dejection:

"By genial spirits fail;
And that can those avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west;
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within. (II. 39-46)

Looking back at the sky with the clouds, stars, and moon mentioned in the previous stanza, Coleridge questions, "And what can those avail/ To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?" Observation of beauty alone is not enough to caliven him; he emphasizes this idea in the exaggeration that should he look forever "on the green light that lingers in the west" (here is another apathetic image expressed languidly by "lingers"), he would not be enlivened by mere "outward forms." The inner "passion" and the "life" alone animate him. Coleridge now rejects the beautiful scene that he overlooks, and from this point on he turns his thoughts inward.

Coleridge addresses his friend again in the fourth stances:

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live;
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud;
And would we might behold, of higher worth,
Than that insensible cold world allowed
To the poor loveless over-anxious crowd,
All from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element! (II. 47-52)
In the first stanza Coleridge read the weather signs to mean that a
storm would be forthcoming and expressed his desire that it come quickly
and enliven his soul. In the second stanza he noted that he had been
watching the sky all evening; his senses perceived the beauty, but he
has been unresponsive to it. Aware of the futility of relying on raw
emotions or sense perception in the aesthetic experience in the third
stanza, he is obliged to look within. In stanza four he emphasizes
objectified emotion.

Philosophically, he tells the lady, "O Lady! we receive but what we
give." Perception of this beautiful scene must come from himself. This
idea along with the fact that "Nature" lives in man's life form the
lines of thought in this passage. Coleridge uses some imagery which is
abstract. He employs other imagery which is visual and applies it to
the soul. Thus he causes it to partake somewhat of an abstract quality.

Our life is Nature's "wedding garment," as well as her "shroud,"
says Coleridge. This is one of the semi-visual images, and it creates a
new relationship. The image was carefully chosen, and Coleridge later
follows it up with the idea that man chooses to link himself with
nature—hence, the use of wedding.

The poet goes on to ask, "And would we mighty behold, of higher
worth, / Than that inanimate cold world allowed/ To the poor loveless
over-anxious crowd." Both the images in these lines are easy from a
visual standpoint. They may be called general description, since they
call up some kind of image to the reader's mind, but further elaboration
is needed to furnish detail. Both the "inanimate cold world" and the
"poor loveless ever-anxious crowd" have in common the fact that the
adjectives used are colorless and dull. The world is physical nature,
and the crowd, those "loveless" and insecure "anxious" masses who
because of their selfishness are not able to ascertain beauty. Fogle
points out that this is an example of Coleridge's use of the under-
standing.2 The understanding can conceive of mechanical structures
only; it cannot see individuals as such. The world personified here
will not "allow" this unappreciative crowd to feast on its beauty.
The poet ascertains how little appreciation most people have of nature.

Coleridge cites his requirements for appreciating nature:

Ali from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element! (ll. 52-56)

These lines strike a similarity with a line from the "one Life" passage
in The Relian House, namely "A light in sound, a sound-like power in
light." Dejection elaborates on this line in images part visual. The
soul is first presented as the root of appreciation of nature, and light
and sound are branches of the soul. Light is seen as a "glory" and a
"fair cloud/ Enveloping the earth." "Glory" suggests brilliancy and
splendor, and this cloud, unlike the nebulous clouds seen in the pro-
ceding stances, has body. "Fair" suggests lightness of hue. "Enveloping
the earth" indicates the grand, universal, unifying aspect of the cloud—
one aspect of the soul. The sound is both "scent" from the soul and is a
child of the soul. It is "potent" and "sweet," and it is "of all sweet
sounds the life and element!" This idea of being both "the life and element," the whole and the part, is further expanded in the following stanza:

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of us
That this strong music in the soul may be;
That, and wherein it doth exist, This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that never was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! in the spirit and the power,
Which wedding nature to us given in donor
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy in the sweet voice, Joy in the luminous cloud—
No in ourselves rejoiced!
And thence flows all that charm or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light. (II. 59-75)

The lady has asked Coleridge what this music in the soul is, and his reply is that she doesn't need to ask this, since she already knows. One line is almost taken verbatim from the previous stanza; "This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist" is "A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud" in stanza four. Throughout this work the poet reaches back to an image mentioned in a previous stanza and enlarges upon it.

The poet does answer the lady by saying that joy is this "music in the soul." This joy is possessed by the "pure, and in their purest hour" and is "undreamt of by the sensual and the proud." Coleridge calls joy "Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower." This line may be compared with an earlier version, "Life of our life the parent and the birth," in which the imagery is decidedly poorer. The later version expresses all that is contained in the first version and more.
To illustrate "Life" and "Life's influence," for example, Coleridge has chosen an image from nature which exactly conveys a parallel thought. The cloud, the "parent" and the "birth," illustrates life and life's outflowing. The "cloud" and "chorus" images sustain the images of light and sound that were set forth as elements of joy in the last stanza. The cloud is the light, and the chorus, sound. This continuation of images on light and sound throws some light on the "one Life" passage in The Poetic Idea:

Of the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all notion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where—

Elements of joy, metaphorically speaking, "light" and "sound" serve to further interpret the idea of joy's being "Life" and "Life's influence."

The Poetic Idea describes the unity of life, whereas Dejection: An Ode discusses life's elements, and for this reason more elucidation is given the light and sound images.

Continuing his exclamation on joy, Coleridge says, "Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power, which wedded nature to us gives in dozen/ A new Earth and new Heaven." In a final unifying stroke Coleridge elaborates on the parallel components of joy, light and sound, in the following lines:

Joy is the sweet voice, joy the luminous cloud—
To our souls we Joelaced.
And thence flows all that charms or our or night,
All relation the echo of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

Having shaped "Joy" for the reader, Coleridge relates it to his own
Life in the next stanza,

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes wore but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine,
But now afflictions bow to them to earth;
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstract research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan;
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And not in almost grew the habit of my soul. (ll. 76-93)

Using personification of abstract qualities, Coleridge draws a sketch of himself. He shows a rough path, where joy "dallied" with distress. Misfortunes wore the "stuff" which Fancy used to make "dreams of happiness." Hope grew like the "twining vine." In the line "And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine," Coleridge uses a concrete visual image as a metaphor for those things in his life which seemed to be his own—perhaps the "Peace, and this cot, and thee, heart-hon-our'd maid" mentioned in The Roly-Moly Pomp, or the "quiet Dalli dear Cot, and Mount sublime" of Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement, or perhaps the lively poetic activity he enjoyed with Dorothy and William Wordsworth, or the health which seemed to be his. The "fruits" an image connotating productivity, growth, realization, gain, etc., could have entailed all or some of the ideas mentioned above. "Foliage" also suggests growth and multiplicity of desire.
With thoughts of the present the poet returns to a use of personification of abstract qualities, since "afflictions" bow him to the earth. They "rob" him of his birth. Afflictions "visit" him and "suspend" his "shaping spirit of imagination." The image of the suspension of imagination is intrinsically interesting; the word "suspend" is rich in denotative value and means, "To cause to cease for a time, as an action, process, use; to withhold for a time on certain conditions; to hang, especially so as to be free on all sides except at the point of support, and to cease temporarily from operation and activity." This varied range of values could be applied to this image. From the personified point of view it can be seen that the imagination is hanging, since it is free from its usual place of stability and action. The imagination is no longer able to embrace the whole of the poet's activities but is clustered into a corner of his life. This image also entails the idea that the imagination has ceased temporarily from operation and activity and that this cessation is due to a certain condition, which has been imputed to affliction.

An explanation of what Coleridge meant by his "shaping spirit of imagination" is necessary to an understanding of the poem. Fogle sums it up and relates it to the reason and the understanding in the following manner:

... Imagination mediates between the reason and understanding, which relatively to each other are active and passive. Reason enables men to apprehend truths beyond the reach of the senses. It is immediate in action and indemonstrable by discursive argument, since its grounds are in itself. Itself the
Affliction becomes passive in the concluding lines of this stanza; the poet reveals that because of affliction he has neglected the imagination. Seeking to escape from affliction "by abstruse research," he steals from his "own nature all the natural man." By "abstruse research" Coleridge means that he used his understanding to the neglect of his "natural man" or imagination. The poet goes on to say that this continual use of understanding to the neglect of reason and hence, the imagination, has almost "growing the habit of my soul."

"Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind, Reality's dark dream begins the next stanza. The "viper thoughts" are metaphysical thoughts provoked by the understanding. Coleridge again uses personified abstract qualities and achieves a visual image with sufficent connotative value. Referring to the "viper thoughts," he continues,

I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
Which long has raved unnoticed, that a cavern
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That intoament forth! Thou mind, that rav't at without,
Baro gray, or mountain-slime, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove where the woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long hold the witch's home,
Not these are wiser instruments for thee,
And Lucanist was in this world of shadows,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Link at Devil's yule, with worse than unctuous song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.

Then fester, perfect in all tragic sound!
Then mighty Poet, o'er to frenzy hold!
What toll'st thou now about?

'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
With groans, of trampled man, with smarting sounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold.
But much! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all in vain—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affliction,
And tempered with delight.

As Otway's self had framed the tender lay—
'Tis of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way.
And now nears home in bitter grief and fear,
And now nears home, and hopes to make her mother hear.

(II. 26-125)

Earlier Coleridge turned inward from the tranquil, uninspiring scene to examine his depression and the somber thoughts accompanying it. Now he turns to the storm which has come and the wind "which long has waved unnoticed," With bold verbal images he depicts the present scene. With "lengthened!" he raises a visual image of one which is primarily sound in "not a scream! Of agony by torture lengthened out/ That into sent forth!" The wind is again the creative force. Coleridge addresses the wind and pictures the "clawed" "mountain-taun," "blasted tree," "pine-grove neither woodman never climb," and the "lonely house, long hold the witch's home." These strange eerie figures of barracoons and desolation, Coleridge now says "were wiser instruments for thee!/ And Lucanist!"
Coleridge had previously yearned for the wind to play boldly upon
the lute, and he hoped that it would rouse him as it had done in the
past. At this point the winds are blowing strongly, and the excoosed
poet would send the wind to those desolate places of no human habitation.
Obliquely, perhaps the poet is equating his earlier passive state to
that of the barren, solitary images he has drawn. An impassioned poet
does not require such a wild wind.

With sober hues he sees April as a month of "dark-brown gardens,"
but he also sees it as a month of showers and "peeping flowers." The
wind makes "Devlins" yule, with verse than wintry song, The blossoms,
leaves, and timorous leaves among." The wind plays havoc with the
blossoms and lads and ravages the earth much in the same way that
affliction in stanza six took from the poet his fruits and foliage.
Once more the poet reveals that the wind's work that he anticipated
carrier does not at all please him now. He rejects it and connects it
with the dismal, gloomy aspects of life.

Still the wind wins his praise: "Thou Actor, perfect in all
tragic costume/ Thou mighty Foot, o' on to frenzy loud!" The image
"frenzy" stresses the emotional excitement which carries the artist
out of himself. In this stanza Coleridge displaces his spirit of
depression on the storm, and the storm now serves as a parallel to the
activity of his mind. He is aware of the fact that his imagination has
been stimulated into full operation, and he wishes that the stormy
wind would cease, since it competes with his own mental activity.
He asks the wind, "What tell'at thou now about?" and he answers,

"'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout, / With groans, of trampled men,
with smarting wounds—/ At once they groan with pain, and shudder with
the cold!" Here is an image of horror. The wind even seems to be
telling of human suffering.

A pause comes in the storm, and then "all is over." The diction
becomes quiet with such phrases as "sounds less deep and loud," "a
tale of less affright," and "tempored with delight." Coleridge then
compares the sound that the wind makes on the lute to a lay which he
erroneously ascribes to Otway (II. 120-125), in which the motifs of
barren nature and human suffering are juxtaposed.

The imagery in this passage returns to the pattern set earlier in
the poem. A number of serial images are clustered about the wind and
describe the wind's heightened activity. In bold, broad strokes
Coleridge draws scenes at polarity to those he depicted in the first
two stanzas. With a quickened pen he reveals the activity of the
storm.

In the concluding stanza Coleridge turns his thoughts toward
Sara, and the poem ends with a mood of creative calm:

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep;
Full colden ray my friend such vigils keep;
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth;
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth;
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul.
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice. (ll. 126-139)

The sleepless poet exercises his imaginative feeling towards his friend in wishing that she may sleep. The storm-nature imagery culminates in the following lines,

And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!

Quiet and serene, this image is perhaps the most exquisite one in the entire poem.

Anticipating the morning, Coleridge envisions Sara as being light-hearted with "gay fancy" and "cheerful eyes." "Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice," he says. Elaborating on joy, he remarks, "To her may all things live," and in this he emphasizes "the passion and the life, whose fountains are within." In the line "Their life the eddying of her living soul" he elaborates on the "wonted impulse" or the effect of a beautiful scene upon the imagination.

Finally, he addresses her "Simple spirit, guided from above, Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice," and his desire is that she ever be able to rejoice. Coleridge's period of dejection is over. His imagination is no longer "suspended" or stolen by "abstruse research," since in his thoughts toward Sara he exercises those branches of his imagination—his reason and his understanding.

Unlike the other conversation poems in which a single type of
Imagery may be traced throughout. Dejection shows a use of various types intertextured to give the poem a unified effect. The stanzas vary according to the types and numbers of images used. Stance one, for example, shows the use of polar and central images, whereas serial images alone are used in stanza two. Stance three marks a turning point, since Coleridge turns his thoughts inward, and many images found throughout the rest of the poem, though visual, are found in various combinations with the abstract. This new type of imagery has been called semi-visual or abstract. Coleridge's mood of dejection is over in stanza seven, where he uses serial images to depict the work of the wind, and serial images are clustered about the lady in stanza eight. Also, interwoven in the poem is a nature motif, which reinforces the unity given by the visual imagery.
Notes to Chapter Five

1. The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London, 1957), pp. 178-179. All quotations from Coleridge's poetry which appear in this chapter are taken from this edition and henceforth will be identified by line in the text.

Chapter Six—Conclusion

Thomas H. Bayley in *The English Romantic Poets* defined the purposes of this study when he remarked that the conversation poems "are all of unquestionably high quality, perhaps undervalued, and certainly not properly recognized as a group." Common characteristics of the poems were considered in the introduction, and subsequent chapters, through a discussion of the visual imagery, reveal their similarities and dissimilarities. A study of the visual imagery alone suffices to show the "unquestionably high quality" of the group, since it is a key to the unity and artistic merit of each poem.

Coleridge, it has been noted, adapted the type of imagery to its use in the poem. Central imagery, consisting of one image reiterated throughout the poem, acts to intensify; it ran its gauntlet in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* from the physical harp in Coleridge's window to the metaphysical harps of "animated nature." Serial imagery relates a chain of experiences, such as the imaginary journey made by Coleridge's friends and his own experiences in *This Lime-tree Bower*. Poral imagery marks a contrast; as opposed to the "master man" and the "quiet spirit-healing neck" are the prospects of war in *Forsyth in Solitude*. Multifarious imagery relates various moods; its multicolored are intricately interwoven in *Dedication: An Ode*. Threaded throughout the poems, the visual
Images are the unifying forces.

Unlike Gerald Manley Hopkins's poems, which for many years lay in an attic unknown and unheard of, many of Coleridge's poems are found in anthologies, and Dornbam includes the entire group in his *Anthology of Romanticism*. Yet the conversation poems have been rather barren of scholarship, the "mystery poems" holding the fascination of the critics to the neglect of these. This study attempts to give the conversation poems their rightful place. In 1792, Coleridge wrote to his wife, "I am deeply convinced that if I were so to remain a few years among objects for whom I had no affection, I should totally lose the powers of intellect—love is the vital air of my genius." He composed the conversation poems at a time when he loved and was loved, and when he could indeed write of his visual powers in his "Apologia Pro Vita Sua":

The poet in his lente yet genial hour
Gives to his eyes a magnifying power:
Or rather he excavates his eyes
From the black chalcosan accidents of size—
In unotusus cones of kindling coal,
Or smoke upswathing from the pipe's own bowl,
His gifted boon can see
Phantoms of sublimity.
Notes to Chapter Six


Bibliography

I. Books


II. Articles


